

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

I call on my servant.

First Reading

I thank you for your faithfulness and love, which excel all we ever knew of you.

Psalm

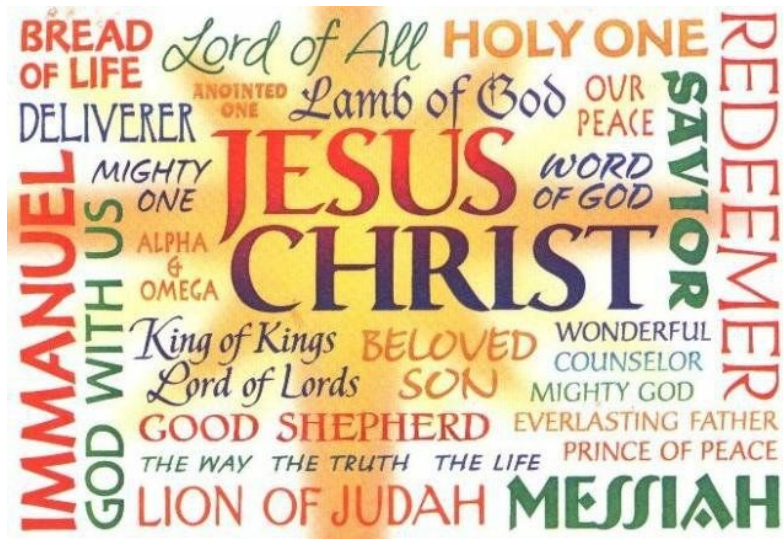
How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge!

Second Reading

Father,
help us to seek the values
that will bring us lasting joy in this changing world.
In our desire for what you promise
make us one in mind and heart.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to explore further:
Isaiah 22: 19–23; Ps. 137 (138); Romans 11: 33–36; Matthew 16: 13–20



But YOU, who do you say I am?

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A, 27th August 2023

'But you, who do you say I am?'

Today's readings focus on the way God looks on the lowly, the ones who need help.

The **Gospel** encourages us to reflect on our own faith in Jesus. As we seek to answer truthfully Jesus's question about his identity, we may also ponder on Peter, a simple fisherman, who is given the keys of the Kingdom and entrusted to build the Lord's church.

In the **First Reading**, a lowly servant is also given keys. He is entrusted with authority and will become a father to the nations. The key of the house of David is on his shoulder.

The **Psalm** expresses the gratitude of a lowly person. In their distress they call and the Lord answers, giving them the strength they need.

St Paul, in the **Second Reading**, asks several questions that no one can really answer. Thereby he leads us to realise the omnipotence, benevolence and wisdom of God.

This week, like St Paul, we might also want to give glory to the Lord. Through our prayer we trust that God will help and empower the lowly and the needy, whether near at hand or further afield.



Opening Prayer

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.

Second Reading Romans 11: 33–36

How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge – and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of the Lord? Who could ever be his counsellor? Who could ever give him anything or lend him anything? All that exists comes from him; all is by him and for him. To him be glory for ever! Amen.

Before reading the text, I take a few moments to come to quiet.

I try to leave behind the worries and anxieties that may besiege me.

I take a couple of deep breaths and then breathe normally.

I reflect on my mood. How am I feeling today?

What are my hopes and desires for this prayer time?

I tell the Lord, simply, from my heart.

In time, I read these words of St Paul, perhaps several times.

Is there a phrase that draws my attention?

Perhaps I don't fully understand its meaning ...

or maybe it brings to mind some episode in my own life?

I ask the Lord or his Holy Spirit to help me.

When have I encountered God's wisdom in my life?

Perhaps I only noticed its impact with hindsight.

I tell the Lord how I felt then, and how I feel now.

Can I recognise that Paul isn't expecting me to answer the questions he poses here? Perhaps they are only a way to make me reflect on the all-encompassing nature of the Lord. So I ponder silently.

I may find myself repeating softly the final words of praise.

Gradually, I let their meaning sink in.

I come from God. All I have is by him. All I do is for him.

How does that make me feel?

Slowly, I bring my prayer to a close, thanking the Lord of wisdom and understanding for the insights he has given me.

Perhaps I use the final phrase as my mantra for today:

To him be glory for ever!

Gospel Matthew 16: 13–20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Whether I am in a good place to pray in silence with plenty of time, or whether I can only snatch a few moments in a busy, noisy day, I come to some inner quiet in the way which I know works best for me.

As I read the Gospel text, I may like to imagine myself with the disciples, chatting with Jesus. Perhaps I am one of them, or simply an onlooker.

I pay attention to the way they relate to the Lord, the tone of their voices, their accents, their postures, how they look at him.

When my turn comes and Jesus asks me: '*But you* [insert your name], *who do you say I am?*', what do I answer?

Maybe I find it hard to put this into my own words, simply, from my heart.

Perhaps all I can do is assure Jesus of my love, in words or feelings.

I stay here as long as I need.

After a while, I may feel bold enough to ask Jesus the same question about myself: '*But you, who do you say I am?*'

I listen to his response.

How do I feel? Comforted, surprised, challenged ... or...?

Jesus gives Peter a very specific mission. Are there ways that I can help him build God's Church? Maybe I ask the Lord to show me how I can do this. I listen carefully.

Eventually, I conclude my prayer with my own words of gratitude.