

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time: August 23, 2020

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

Reflection on the Gospel (*Matthew 16:13-20*)

In today's Gospel, Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but your Heavenly Father..."

Peter spoke up and answered Jesus' question. Peter said yes to God. I wonder if Peter thought What did I just say? What just happened? Where did all of that come from? Maybe I should have remained silent. Maybe I should have responded in my own way. Peter was open to the vulnerability of receiving God's revelation in him and then speaking God's revelation out loud to Jesus and to the other disciples.

I'm in awe! This is new insight for me. Peter showed courage, humility, faith and trust in God. What an example for us!

Have you ever felt the very presence of God working in you? I remember in the '90s, I was a liturgy planner for an hour during the Easter Vigil here at St. V's.

As I was preparing for my hour on the Book of Job, employing my Clown ministry character of Zippy, I clearly remember the phrase, "I felt encapsulated in God's love" come to me. I asked myself, "Where did that come from?" I knew that it didn't come from me. As I performed as Zippy that evening, I could feel God's presence in me and working through me, as I was having an intimate raw talk with God in the darkness of the middle of the night. The presence of God was palpable by others, as it was when Zippy performed on the wide open lawn in front of Loyola House at Blue Ridge Summit on our parish retreat.

The experience was beyond my making...it was beyond all of us. One said it was surreal. God was alive among us! What a gift! Can you recall similar experiences in your life?

In the Gospel, Jesus was pleased with Peter's response. Jesus said to Peter, "...you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ...I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven." Peter was an ordinary man, who had a deep faith, and who loved Jesus deeply. Even though Peter doubted Jesus, as scripture tells us, Jesus knew the person of Peter, much better than Peter knew himself. Jesus gave Peter the authority to lead the church, after Jesus' resurrection and his return to the Father.

I pose the question to us all. "What work / role is God calling each of us to do, during this crazy time of the pandemic, time of intense racism and the upcoming important presidential election? Do we have the courage, the faith and the humility to be open to God and to respond to God's call, whatever it might be. Maybe sitting with God in silence, could help us hear, what Our Loving God, who knows us better, than we know ourselves, could be saying to each one of us..."

Mary Lynn Myers