

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Readings & Background on the Gospel Reading

This Sunday's Readings

First Reading: *Isaiah 22:19-23*

God will remove Shebna from his office as master of the palace.

Responsorial Psalm : *Psalm 138:1-3,6,8*

God's kindness is forever.

Second Reading : *Romans 11:33-36*

Paul sings praise to God.

Gospel Reading : *Matthew 16:13-20*

Simon Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ and is given the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is important to read today's Gospel and next week's Gospel as two parts of a single story.

These readings are a **turning point** in Matthew's Gospel.

This week we hear ***Jesus name Simon Peter as the rock upon which he will build his Church.***

Next week we will hear ***Jesus call this same Simon Peter "Satan" when he reacts negatively to Jesus' prediction about his passion and death.***

In today's Gospel, ***Jesus asks his disciples what people are saying about his identity.*** The disciples indicate that ***most people believe that Jesus is a prophet of Israel.***

Then Jesus asks his disciples who they believe that he is. ***Simon Peter answers, identifying Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.***



Jesus **commends Simon Peter for this profession of faith**, indicating that this insight has come from God. Because of Simon Peter's response, ***Jesus calls him the "rock" upon which Jesus will build the Church.***

This is a word play on the name Peter, which is the Greek word for "rock."

Peter is then given special authority by Jesus, a symbolic key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Peter will play an important role in the early Christian community as a spokesperson and a leader.

In today's Gospel, Peter's recognition of Jesus' identity is credited to a revelation by God. This will contrast sharply with Jesus' rebuke of Peter in next week's Gospel. When Peter rejects Jesus' prediction of his passion and death, Peter is said to no longer be thinking as God does but as humans do.



The use of the term *church* in today's Gospel is one of only three such occurrences in Matthew's Gospel.

in this Gospel is being credited as the foundation for the Church, a privilege granted to him because of his recognition of Jesus' identity. The Church continues to be grounded in the faith that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Doctrinal Content:

| <i>Profession of Faith</i> | <i>Sacraments / Liturgy</i> | <i>Christian Life</i> |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| <i>Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve;</i> Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it. (#552) "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. (#85) | Confession of Faith (The Creed) Holy Orders | We are called to be disciples. |



Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Simon Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ and is given the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

As children mature they learn the importance of good leadership in community life. Through Peter's example we can teach them that Christian life and ministry must be rooted in faith in Jesus.

Materials Needed

- A large rock that can be safely passed among the group

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show the group the rock that you have brought and pass it around. As it is passed, ask the group to describe it.
2. ***Rocks are sometimes used as building materials.***
Have you ever seen a rock wall or perhaps rocks used in a house?
Why might rocks be good building materials? (Accept all reasonable answers.)
3. ***In today's Gospel, Jesus calls one of his disciples a "rock" and Jesus says that the Church will be built on this foundation. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.***
4. Read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 16:13-20.
5. ***Which disciple does Jesus call a rock?*** (Peter)
Why does Jesus call Peter a rock? (Peter has just recognized that Jesus is God's Son.)
6. ***Because Peter recognized that Jesus was God's only Son, Jesus gave him a very important job. Jesus told Peter that he would be an important leader and would help to build the Church. Peter was given this job because he believed that Jesus was God's Son. One of the most important jobs of Church leaders today is to help us to remember the importance of our faith in Jesus, God's Son.***
7. Conclude in prayer together for the Church and its leaders.
Pray together a prayer for vocations.



Prayer for Vocations

God, in baptism, you called me by name
and made me a member of your people, the Church.
Help all your people to know their vocation in life
and to respond by living a life of holiness.
For the greater glory and for the service of your people,
raise up dedicated and generous leaders
who will serve as sisters, brothers, priests,
deacons and lay ministers.

Send your Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen me
that I may serve your people
following the example of Jesus your Son
in whose name I make this prayer.
Amen.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)



Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Simon Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ and is given the key to the Kingdom of

Young people are beginning to appreciate the importance of good leadership in community life. In Peter, we see an example of how good Christian leaders are grounded by their faith in Jesus.

Materials Needed: None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. **Who are some leaders in our Church today?**
Why is it important for our Church to have good leaders? (Accept all reasonable answers.)
2. **In today's Gospel reading we hear a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. One disciple is singled out in this conversation and given a leadership role in the Church. Let's listen carefully to see who this person is and what happens.**
3. Invite one or more volunteers to read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 16:13-20.
4. **What question did Jesus ask his disciples?** (What are people saying about me?)
What answers do the disciples give? (John the Baptist, Elijah, the prophets)
And then what does Jesus ask? (He asks for his disciples' opinion.)
Who speaks for the disciples? (Peter)
5. **In this Gospel, Jesus recognizes the disciple Peter as an important leader because Peter professes his belief that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus commends Peter for this, not because he came to this belief on his own, but because God allowed Peter to recognize Jesus as his only Son.**
6. **Peter played an important role in the early Christian community and helped to build the Church. This was a role given to him by God.**

We continue to honor Peter and those who have followed him as leaders in the Church. Today we recognize and honour the pope as Peter's successor. Like Peter, the pope reminds us that we are a people united in the faith that Jesus is God's Son.
7. Conclude in **prayer together for the pope** and all of the leaders of the Church.

Pray together prayers of petition for Church leaders and conclude with today's responsorial psalm.



In our prayers for the pope, such as this one below, we can ask our Heavenly Father to help guide our Holy Father Pope Francis to be a worthy Vicar of Christ (His "representative") as he tends to the spiritual needs of over one *billion* Catholics worldwide.

O God, the Shepherd and Ruler of all Your faithful people, mercifully look upon Your servant [name of Pope], whom You have chosen as the chief Shepherd to preside over Your Church. We beg You to help him edify, both by word and example, those over whom he has charge, that he may reach everlasting life together with the flock entrusted to him. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer ties in nicely with the Gospels. **Just as our Lord called St. Peter the rock** on which He would build His Church (Matt 16:18-19) so too did he instruct him before His ascension into Heaven to "**feed my sheep**" (John 21:17). He chose Peter to be in charge of his flock, his Church. According to scripture and Church history, our Holy Father is indeed the successor to St. Peter! As such, **the pope must guide the Catholic Church in conformity with what is called the magisterium**. This is the teaching authority of our faith, as handed down to us from our Lord and His Apostles to the Early Church Fathers, and to other theologians and religious as well over the centuries.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)



Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Simon Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ and is given the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Young people at this age are fond of giving one another nicknames that capture personal characteristics. Jesus, in a sense, **gives Simon a nickname—"Peter"—which means "rock."**

Materials Needed

- Use an Internet search engine or other resource to find the meaning of the names of the young people in your group. Write each name and its meaning on a strip of paper.

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Tell the young people that you have researched the meaning of each of their names and hand out the prepared slips of paper.
2. ***How does the meaning of your name describe you? Is it an accurate description?***
Discuss.
3. ***Sometimes, we make up nicknames for people that describe something about them.***
Ask if any of the young people go by nicknames or have family members who do. (Avoid asking if friends have nicknames because some of the nicknames given to "friends" are uncomplimentary.)
4. ***In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus gives a nickname to his disciple Simon.***
5. Have a volunteer read aloud this Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 16:13-20.
6. ***Jesus believed that his Father gave Simon the insight to recognize Jesus' true identity. So, he renamed Simon, "Peter," which means "rock."***
Why do you think Jesus chose that name? (Peter had a strong personality; Peter would be a strong foundation for the Church.)
7. ***Choose for yourselves a name that you think Jesus might give you if he was describing your strengths as a disciple. It doesn't need to be a conventional or common name.***
What name would you choose and why?
Discuss.
8. ***Names are important. They tell us something about the person.***
When we pray the Sign of the Cross, we call on the names of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Let's conclude by slowly praying the Sign of the Cross.
9. Lead the young people in praying aloud the Sign of the Cross.



Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Family Connection



Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Simon Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ and is given the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Today's Gospel reminds us that the Church is built on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. Peter announces the core of ***our faith, that Jesus is God's only Son.***

The family, as the domestic church, has this same faith as its foundation.

As you gather together as a family, talk about people whose faith has helped you to be a member of the Church and talk about what you have learned from leaders in our Church today.

Read together today's Gospel, Matthew 16:13-20.

Talk about what you know about Peter and his importance to the early Christian community.

Talk about what we can learn from Peter and his profession of faith about Jesus.

Conclude in prayer together by praying today's Psalm or an Act of Faith.

Prayer for Vocations

God, in baptism, you called me by name
and made me a member of your people, the Church.
Help all your people to know their vocation in life
and to respond by living a life of holiness.
For the greater glory and for the service of your people,
raise up dedicated and generous leaders
who will serve as sisters, brothers, priests,
deacons and lay ministers.

Send your Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen me
that I may serve your people
following the example of Jesus your Son
in whose name I make this prayer.
Amen.