

August 21, 2020

Are We Like Peter?

Today's gospel is one we may almost know by heart. Jesus is wondering what people are saying about his identity, so he asks his disciples. They respond that some think he's John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah. But when he asks them who they think he is, Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then Jesus entrusts his fledgling Church to this rock ("*Petrus*" means "rock"); gives him "the keys to the kingdom of heaven" and promises that the netherworld will never overwhelm it.

We who know the rest of the story might be amazed that Jesus gives over into Peter's keeping, this struggling believing community. Who would choose someone like him to be a leader when his faith leaves him during the storm, he eventually denies his friend and long-awaited Messiah not once, but three times?

Peter, as we know, is forgiven for his denial and becomes a true apostle of Jesus, spreading the good news of salvation throughout Asia Minor. According to tradition, he dies a martyr in Rome during Nero's time, around 64 or 67 A.D.

So, perhaps, he is the perfect example for the rest of us who also deny the Lord in many small ways: in our selfishness, in our refusal to forgive someone who has hurt us, in our deciding who deserves our compassion and who doesn't. We, too, can ask the Holy Spirit, to change our hearts and form us, little by little, into the One we follow.

May peace be with each of us and those suffering the most during this stressful time.

Sr. Sheral