



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time

Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

MATTHEW 16:15-16

Overview

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks his disciples two questions. First: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Then he makes the question personal: "But who do you say that I am?"

The first question concerns public opinion. The second demands a personal act of faith. It is possible to know what others say about Jesus—to call him a prophet, teacher, or moral example—without truly recognizing who he is. Peter responds: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." This is the central confession of Christian faith: Jesus is not merely one religious figure among many. He is the promised Saviour and the Son who reveals the Father.

Jesus tells Peter that this knowledge has not come from "flesh and blood," but from the Father in heaven. First and foremost, faith is a gift of grace. We respond freely, but God opens our hearts to recognize Christ.

Peter's confession also gives him a mission. Jesus declares: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." Peter's authority is not for personal power; it is a responsibility to preserve the faith and strengthen the Church in unity. The Church is founded on the apostles, with Peter as their visible principle of unity, while Christ remains its supreme cornerstone.

This question is addressed to every adult Christian: Who is Jesus in the concrete decisions of your life? If he is truly the Messiah and Son of God, then his teaching cannot be treated as optional advice. It must shape our priorities, relationships, moral choices, and response to suffering.

May Peter's words become our own—not merely words recited at Mass, but a confession lived with trust, humility, and perseverance: Jesus Christ is Lord, Saviour, and the foundation of my life.

Readings

First Reading

Isaiah 22:15, 19-23

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord God of hosts: Go to the steward, to Shebna,¹ who is master of the household, and say to him: I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your post.

On that day, I will call my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, and will clothe him with your robe and bind your sash on him. I will commit your authority to his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David²; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.

I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his ancestral house.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

¹ A royal official in the court of Hezekiah of Judah who held the position of prime minister or royal steward. Isaiah's condemnation of Shebna centred on his character rather than specific policy failures.

² The key symbolizes delegated authority over access and governance. Christ alone possesses ultimate authority in heaven.

R. Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name
for your steadfast love and your faithfulness. **R.**

For you have exalted your name
and your word above everything.
On the day I called, you answered me
you increased my strength of soul. **R.**

For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.
Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? "Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?"

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man ³ is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah ⁴, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.
The Gospel of the Lord.

³ Title used by Jesus to express his heavenly origin, earthly mission, and glorious future coming.

⁴ The "anointed one," the Redeemer who is spoken of by the prophets of the Old Testament and whose mission is to bring salvation to Israel and the whole world.

Background

Isaiah 22:19–23 announces the removal of Shebna, an unfaithful official, and the appointment of Eliakim. Authority is presented not as personal privilege but as a responsibility received from God for the good of the people. Eliakim is described as a father to Jerusalem and receives "the key of the house of David," symbolizing the authority to open and close. The passage prepares the way for the Gospel. The key given to Eliakim becomes a biblical image of entrusted stewardship: authentic authority must be secure, faithful, and exercised in service rather than self-promotion.

Psalms 138 is a song of thanksgiving rooted in God's steadfast love and faithfulness. We praise God with our whole heart, recognizing that divine fidelity—not human strength—is the foundation of hope.

Romans 11:33–36 Paul emphasizes that God's wisdom is beyond human calculation, and his judgments are "unsearchable." This is not an excuse for irrationality, but an act of humility. Faith recognizes that God's plan is trustworthy even when its full meaning is not immediately visible.

Matthew 16:13–20: Jesus brings the disciples to Caesarea Philippi and first asks what others say about him. The answers identify him with important prophetic figures, but not yet personal. Jesus then asks the decisive personal question: "Who do you say that I am?" Christianity is not merely knowledge about Jesus; it is a personal relationship with him. Peter answers on behalf of the apostles: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus declares that this insight does not come merely from human reasoning but from the Father's revelation. Peter's confession is both personal and ecclesial: he speaks his own faith, yet also represents the apostolic Church.

These readings proclaim that Christ reveals himself, establishes his Church, and entrusts authority for the salvation of his people. Human leaders may fail, as Isaiah's passage warns, and even Peter will later show weakness. Nevertheless, God remains faithful.

Key Messages for Children

- † Christianity is a relationship with Jesus.
- † Faith is a gift from God.
- † Remember to thank God.

Key Messages for Leaders

- † Help the children discover Peter's answer: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- † Help children respond with prayer and thanksgiving.

Leader's Personal Reflection Questions

- How will I help the children answer Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?"
- Does my ministry point the children toward Jesus?

Takeaway

- ✓ Jesus is the Son of God.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

At the proper moment, the priest invites the children to come forward. The leaders may come forward and stand facing the altar with the children. The priest then addresses the children.

Dear children, today we hear Jesus ask Peter who people say that he is. Go with your leaders and listen to what Peter says.

We will welcome you back soon.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome

The leaders help the children sit and prepare. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Let us quiet our hearts and make the Sign of the Cross. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Father in heaven, help us follow your ways. Keep us close to you and lead us to eternal joy. Help us to love one another.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, at a minimum, proclaim the Gospel.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at least the Gospel, then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all the reading.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children.

First Reading

Isaiah 22:15, 19-23

God said, "Shebna has not cared well for my people, so I will choose a new leader.

I will call my faithful servant Eliakim. I will give him special clothes and place the key to King David's house on his shoulder. The key will show everyone that I have given him an important job.

Eliakim will care for the people like a loving father. When he opens a door, no one will close it; and when he closes a door, no one will open it.

I will make him strong and dependable. His family and all the people will be proud of him."

R. Your love, O Lord, lasts forever

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart.

I praise you.

I bow before you and thank you
because you always love me. **R.**

When I called to you,
you heard my prayer.
You gave me courage
and strengthened me. **R.**

How wonderful God is!

God knows everything and is wiser than anyone. We cannot always understand God's plans or ways.

Who knows what God is thinking? Who could ever tell God what to do?
Everything we have is already a gift from God.

All things come from God, all things live through God, and all things belong to God.

May everyone praise God forever. Amen.

One day, Jesus asked his friends, "Who do people say that I am?" They answered, "Some people think you are John the Baptist. Others think you are Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet sent by God."

Then Jesus asked them a very important question: "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah—the Son of the living God!"

Jesus said, "Simon, you are blessed! My Father in heaven helped you understand this. I will call you Peter, which means 'rock.' Like a strong rock, you will help me build my Church, and nothing will be able to defeat it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. I trust you to help lead and care for my people."

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

What did you hear?

Jesus asked his friends a very personal question: "Who do you say that I am?"

Who asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" (Jesus)

Peter knew the answer. He said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" Peter understood that Jesus was more than a teacher or a kind person. Jesus was God's Son, sent to save us and show us how much God loves us.

What did Peter say about Jesus? ("You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.")

Jesus gave Peter a special job. He called Peter a "rock" because Jesus wanted him to help keep the Church strong.

What does the name Peter mean? (Rock)

Jesus also gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Keys show that someone has been given an important responsibility.

What do keys open?

Peter was trusted to lead, teach, forgive, and care for God's people.

Why did Jesus give Peter the keys?

Who helps lead the Church today as Peter's successor? (Pope Leo XVI)

Jesus also asks each of us, "Who do you say that I am?"

If Jesus asked you, "Who do you say that I am?" what would you say?

We can answer, "Jesus, you are the Son of God. You are my friend, my teacher, and my Saviour." We show that we believe this when we pray, listen to Jesus, forgive others, share what we have, and help someone in need. Just as Jesus gave Peter a special job, he has something special for each of us to do. Even though we are young, we can help make the Church strong by loving God and caring for one another.

What is one loving thing you can do this week to help make Jesus' Church strong?

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray to the Lord.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The leader says:

Leader:

Jesus asks each of us, "Who do you say that I am?" Let us present ourselves and our prayers to Him, trusting that He is the Son, and let us bring our prayers to Him: "Lord, hear our prayer."

R. Children: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For Pope Leo XIV, bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve God's people, that Jesus may help them lead with wisdom and love, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For leaders everywhere, that they may make good choices and care especially for people who are poor, lonely, or afraid, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For our families, teachers, and friends, that our homes, schools, and parish may be filled with kindness and peace, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For people who are sick, sad, hungry, or hurting, that they may receive healing, comfort, and loving care, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For the prayers we hold quietly in our hearts... (pause), we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving God, you sent Jesus, your Son, to guide us and show us your love. Hear the prayers we have offered today. Help us follow Jesus, grow strong in faith, and care for one another.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.

Please note that the Handouts are available at:

Bulletin: TheKidsBulletin.com – Goodwill donation suggested
Quiz Handout provided by: thewordthisweek.net



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Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,

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