

Rev. Randall Hubbard
Isaiah 22:19-23
Romans 11:33-36
Matthew 16:13-20

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 20-21, 2011

Last Sunday, after I wrapped up mass and seeing people, I started over to Huntingburg, Indiana to have a meeting with my spiritual director. We try to get together about every four to six weeks, but as happened during the summer with all kinds of things happening with my transitioning, coming here, and he had some travel plans and stuff, we really weren't able to get together for the biggest part of the summer. So last Sunday was my first time to meet with my spiritual director, who happens to be a monk from St. Meinrad, since I became pastor at Epiphany. We had a lot to talk about. A lot.

But in the end when it was all said and done, at the end of it, and for me spiritual direction is an important part of my ministry, it helps me maintain some balance, some perspective. My spiritual director is wonderful at giving me affirmation and encouragement when it's needed, but also challenging me when I need the challenge to look at things with a little different perspective. We were wrapping up, and he said, "Three thoughts for you. Three thoughts for you. Take to prayer, what gifts has God given you that you are to offer the community of Epiphany? What gifts has God already given you that you are to offer the community of Epiphany? Then also think about what gifts God wants to give you to help you serve the community of Epiphany." And he said, "The final one is to ask God how God wants you to stretch yourself in serving the community of Epiphany." All three were very poignant questions that really helped give some focus and perspective.

And I share this with you because part of that is growing an insight of who we are in relationship with God. For me, that's where spiritual direction helps me to grow in my understanding in who I am in relationship with God. And in essence, in our gospel this weekend, Jesus asks a question of his disciples. First he asks the question – who do others say that I am? Now, the disciples having mingled with the crowds who have gathered with Jesus, having the crowds gathered to hear Jesus proclaim the good news, to see the great miracles he's performing, all the healing, the demons he's expelling, even the great miracles of feeding the

multitude and the like, hearing that, being amongst those crowds, what are they saying about me is what Jesus is asking. Who are they saying that I am?

And so the disciples say, well some of them said you're John the Baptist come back from the dead. And some think that you're Elijah. And some think you're Jeremiah or one of the great prophets. And so this is the impression that the crowds who have gathered around Jesus have of him. This is who he is.

So he takes it a step further. His disciples are his intimate crowd. These are his friends. These are the ones that are there with him through it all. So who do you say that I am?

And then we hear that great profession of faith on the part of Peter. You are the Christ, the son of the Living God. The one who is to come. Now as we hear that great profession of faith, Jesus acknowledges the insight that Peter was open to God giving him that insight, giving him that faith to know that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ. But as we come here as a people of faith, we too are asked the question, just as Deacon Lucio pointed out in our penitential rite, who do we say that Jesus is? Who do we say that Jesus is? Who is Jesus to us? Do we take time to reflect on our relationship with Jesus and who he is to us in our lives? Maybe a more basic question is do we tell others who Jesus is? Are we willing to share our faith of who we believe Jesus to be as our Savior, and as the Christ, as the one sent to redeem the world? Are we willing to let others know who we believe Jesus to be?

For we are called as a people of faith to continue that work of Jesus, to continue to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom, to proclaim the good news of God's love and God's mercy. And that often happens through our words and our actions. And so maybe another question for us is who do people say that we are? Who others, outside of our community, who do they say WE are? Is there evidence in our lives, in word or in deed, that they can say who we are as followers of Christ?

It is important for us to pause and to ask that question. It is not about an ego trip in terms of what do people think about me. It's not about what people think about us, but it is a matter of what do people get from us? How do they identify us? How do they know us to be? And if we say we are one thing, then our words and our actions are going to support that's who we are. And the real challenge for us is asking, do our words and our actions support, make us authentic, in who we profess to be?

And so we come here then, a people of faith, and we hear Jesus ask some pointed questions. But we, too, recognize that we have to ask ourselves some pointed questions. Who is Jesus? Who do others say that we are in our relationship with Jesus? Who do we say that we are in our words and our actions? And are we open then to God working through us and in us and with us so that we may truly be that people of faith that we are called to be? A people who give witness to Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Redeemer, the one sent to show us our God's great love for us. But we have to pause at times and ask those questions, to gain perspective, to open ourselves to what our God asks of us in faith, in sharing our faith with others.