



**CUSA - An Apostolate of Persons with Chronic Illness and/or Disability**  
**(The following represents the notes of Fr. Lawrence Jagdfeld for his Bible Study class. These notes are all taken from other sources by Scripture scholars such as John Pilch, Reginald Fuller, Sr. Diane Bergant, Sr. Barbara Reid, Thomas Welbers, et. al.)**

## **21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Isaiah 22:19-23

*Thus says the Lord, the GOD of hosts: Up, go to that official, Shebna, master of the palace,*

Footnote:

[1] Shebna: referred to as the scribe in Isaiah 36:3.

Who has hewn for himself a sepulcher on a height and carved his tomb in the rock: "What are you doing here, and what people have you here, that here you have hewn for yourself a tomb?" The LORD shall hurl you down headlong, mortal man! He shall grip you firmly and roll you up and toss you like a ball into an open land To perish there, you and the chariots you glory in, you disgrace to your master's house! *I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station. On that day I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah;*

Footnote:

[1] Eliakim: also referred to in Isaiah 36:3; he is described as loyal to God.

*I will clothe him with your robe, and gird him with your sash, and give over to him your authority. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open. I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his family;*

- Leadership positions in ancient Israel were political as well as religious.
- Shebna is identified as master of the palace in this reading; elsewhere he is said to be a scribe and Eliakim is master of the palace.

*From Lachish the king of Assyria sent his commander with a great army to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. When he stopped at the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field, there came out to him the master of the palace, Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna the scribe, and the herald Joah, son of Asaph. (Isaiah 36:2-3)*

*Then the master of the palace, Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, Shebna the scribe, and the*

*herald Joah, son of Asaph, came to Hezekiah with their garments torn, and reported to him what the commander had said. (Isaiah 36:22)*

*They called for the king, who sent out to them Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, the master of the palace; Shebna the scribe; and the herald Joah, son of Asaph. (2Kgs 18:18)*

*Then the master of the palace, Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, Shebna the scribe, and the herald Joah, son of Asaph, came to Hezekiah with their garments torn, and reported to him what the commander had said. (2Kgs 18:37)*

- So his position was reduced to that of a scribe which would involve loss of honor and shame.
- Eliakim is the son of Hilkiyah who was the high priest who found the copy of the book of the Law, which prompted Josiah's reform of the nation.

*The high priest Hilkiyah informed the scribe Shaphan, "I have found the book of the law in the temple of the LORD." Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, who read it. Then the scribe Shaphan went to the king and reported, "Your servants have smelted down the metals available in the temple and have consigned them to the master workmen in the temple of the LORD." The scribe Shaphan also informed the king that the priest Hilkiyah had given him a book, and then read it aloud to the king. When the king had heard the contents of the book of the law, he tore his garments and issued this command to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, Achbor, son of Micaiah, the scribe Shaphan, and the king's servant Asaiah: "Go, consult the LORD for me, for the people, for all Judah, about the stipulations of this book that has been found, for the anger of the LORD has been set furiously ablaze against us, because our fathers did not obey the stipulations of this book, nor fulfill our written obligations." So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah betook themselves to the Second Quarter in Jerusalem, where the prophetess Huldah resided. She was the wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. When they had spoken to her, she said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Say to the man who sent you to me, Thus says the LORD: I will bring upon this place and upon its inhabitants all the evil that is threatened in the book which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense to other gods, provoking me by everything to which they turn their hands, my anger is ablaze against this place and it cannot be extinguished.' "But to the king of Judah who sent you to consult the LORD, give this response: 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: As for the threats you have heard, because you were heartsick and have humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard my threats that this place and its inhabitants would become a desolation and a curse; because you tore your garments and wept before me; I in turn have listened, says the LORD. I will therefore gather you to your ancestors; you shall go to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil I will bring upon this place.'" This they reported to the king. (2Kgs:22:8-20)*

- Our presumption here is that the son possesses the same integrity as the father.

- The transfer of power indicates an investiture ceremony. The act of clothing Eliakim in his ceremonial attire symbolized his being clothed with the authority of the new position. The extent of that authority is denoted by three metaphors: father of the people, key to the house, and tent peg.
- Father metaphor: authority over the people of the southern kingdom.
- Key metaphor: not only does he control the goods of the house but who comes in and out of the house as well.
- Tent peg: just as peg holds the tent in place, so he guarantees the stability of the household.
- Finally, prestige will come to his entire family.
- The oracle provides a picture of a person who will provide the order and stability the kingdom of Judah must have needed. If he is not a Messiah himself, he was needed to ensure that the kingdom would survive long enough to produce such a figure.

#### REGINALD FULLER

- In this passage Isaiah denounces one Shebna, the prime minister (“who is master of the household,” v. 15), and predicts his replacement by Eliakim. The passage is notable for its use of the “key” taken up in the gospel today, the *Tu es Petrus* saying.

#### Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

*I thank you, LORD, with all my heart; before the gods to you I sing.*

*I bow low toward your holy temple; I praise your name for your fidelity and love. For you have exalted over all your name and your promise.*

*When I cried out, you answered; you strengthened my spirit.*

*All the kings of earth will praise you, LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth.*

*They will sing of the ways of the LORD: "How great is the glory of the LORD!"*

The LORD is on high, but cares for the lowly and knows the proud from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of dangers, you guard my life when my enemies rage. You stretch out your hand; *your right hand saves me.*

*The LORD is with me to the end. LORD, your love endures forever. Never forsake the work of your hands!*

- A thanksgiving song of an individual; could be a king, a priest, or an ordinary person.
- Borrows traditional phrases to proclaim gratitude which reaches from heaven to earth.
- The first stanza presents the opening declaration of thanksgiving as well as the reasons for gratitude.
- The psalmist sings to God in the presence of “elohim,” a word that can be translated in various ways:
  1. Members of God’s court (Psalm 82:1; Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1)
  2. Pagan gods of the kings mentioned in verse 4 (Deut. 32:8; Josh 24:15; Ps. 86:8)
  3. Idols (Is 41:23; 42:17)
  4. Angels
- Accentuates the notion that while Yahweh is the only God for Israel, other gods do exist for other nations. As the other gods have been demythologized, we have tended to reduce them to angels or scorn them as idols. The psalmist, however, is bearing witness to the highest imaginable powers concerning Yahweh’s goodness.

- Having reached to heaven, the psalmist bows low before God, but God bends down to answer the lowly.
- In the second stanza, God's praise is now sung by earthly powers – all the rulers of earth.
- In the final verses, the psalmist returns to his personal experience of God and prays that his plea will not be in vain.
- Individual prayer of thanksgiving. Begins with sentiments of gratitude, followed by a statement of the reason for being grateful. Concludes with a declaration of confidence in God's enduring faithfulness.

#### 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

- The verses chosen for this Sunday focus on God; the verses referring to earthly kings and even to the psalmist's distress and rescue are missing. The refrain keeps before us our continuing need for God's deliverance
- The reading from Isaiah is a story of a shift in political power, who had been a scribe under Hezekiah, has exalted himself by preparing an elaborate tomb and has put his trust in military power. Therefore God removes him and replaces him with Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah. Eliakim is warned that he too might fall if he does not realize that power and authority come from God. Those who trust in their own power will realize that God has something else in store for them.
- The Gospel reading shows us Peter being invested with the keys of the kingdom. Shortly thereafter, he rejects the idea of the Passion of Jesus. Peter learns by experience of the ongoing need for God's faithful love.
- At the end of his discourse on God's enduring the choice of the Israelites alongside the merciful call of the Gentiles, Paul bursts into rapturous praise of God's mysterious wisdom. God chooses human beings to be the instruments of salvation; however, the salvation comes from God through these instruments, not from the instruments themselves. Paul knows this truth in his very bones. Human ministers need to remember never to fail to call out for God's help.

#### REGINALD FULLER

- Slightly different selections of verses from this psalm are used on the fifth and seventeenth Sundays of the year in series C. Today's refrain ("Lord, your love is eternal") suggests that God's purposes are not defeated by the infidelity of his human instruments. God can replace a faithless agent with another who is faithful to him.

#### **Romans 11:33-36**

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

#### Footnote:

[1] (33-36) This final reflection celebrates the wisdom of God's plan of salvation. As Paul has indicated throughout these chapters, both Jew and Gentile, despite the religious recalcitrance of each, have received the gift of faith. The methods used by God in making this outreach to the world stagger human comprehension but are at the same time a dazzling invitation to abiding faith.

*"For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor?"*

Footnote:

[1] The citation is from the Greek text of Isaiah 40:13. Paul does not explicitly mention Isaiah in this verse, nor Job in 11:35.

*"Or who has given him anything that he may be repaid?"*

Footnote:

[1] Paul quotes from an old Greek version of Jb 41, 3a, which differs from the Hebrew text (Job 41:11a).

*For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever.  
Amen.*

- After talking about God's mercy toward the Gentiles, and how that mercy will ultimately bring Paul's "race" to recognize the Messiah, Paul breaks out into rapturous praise.
- No Christology. Typical Jewish sentiments. The mysterious ways of God are not for us to understand; we simply stand in awe of God's mercy and loving kindness.

REGINALD FULLER

- This magnificent doxology comes at the end of Paul's discussion of Israel's place in salvation history. Biblical theology is an attempt to reflect on the ways of God in salvation history. This is precisely what Paul has been doing in Rom 9-11.
- But the biblical theologian must always confess the inadequacy of his or her work.
- The riches and wisdom of knowledge of God are always too deep to penetrate, God's judgments and ways are unsearchable. No theologian has ever known the mind of the Lord. No theology, however venerable, can claim to be absolute.
- There comes a time when the theologian must lay down the pen and confess the relativity of all his or her formulations. Theology is therefore always subject to change. And theology is best done in the context of liturgy. It must be doxological.

### **Matthew 16:13-20**

*When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

Footnote:

[1] (13-20) The Marcan confession of Jesus as Messiah, made by Peter as spokesman for the other disciples (Matthew 8:27-29; cf also Luke 9:18-20), is modified significantly here. The confession is of Jesus both as Messiah and as Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). Jesus' response, drawn principally from material peculiar to Matthew, attributes the confession to a divine revelation granted to Peter alone (Matthew 16:17) and makes him the rock on which Jesus will build his church (Matthew 16:18) and the disciple whose authority in the church on earth will be confirmed in heaven, i.e., by God (Matthew 16:19).

[2] (13) Caesarea Philippi: situated about twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the territory

ruled by Philip, a son of Herod the Great, tetrarch from 4 B.C. until his death in A.D. 34 (see the note on Matthew 14:1). He rebuilt the town of Paneas, naming it Caesarea in honor of the emperor, and Philippi ("of Philip") to distinguish it from the seaport in Samaria that was also called Caesarea. Who do people say that the Son of Man is?: although the question differs from the Marcan parallel (Mark 8:27: "Who . . . that I am?"), the meaning is the same, for Jesus here refers to himself as the Son of Man (cf Matthew 16:15).

*They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

Footnote:

[1] John the Baptist: see Matthew 14:2. Elijah: cf Malachi 4:1; Sirach 48:10; and see the note on Matthew 3:4. Jeremiah: an addition of Matthew to the Marcan source.

*He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

Footnote:

[1] The Son of the living God: see Matthew 2:15; 3:17. The addition of this exalted title to the Marcan confession eliminates whatever ambiguity was attached to the title Messiah. This, among other things, supports the view proposed by many scholars that Matthew has here combined his source's confession with a post-resurrectional confession of faith in Jesus as Son of the living God that belonged to the appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter; cf 1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34.

*Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father."*

Footnote:

[1] Flesh and blood: a Semitic expression for human beings, especially in their weakness. Has not revealed this . . . but my heavenly Father: that Peter's faith is spoken of as coming not through human means but through a revelation from God is similar to Paul's description of his recognition of who Jesus was; see Gal 1:15-16, ". . . when he [God] . . . was pleased to reveal his Son to me. . . ."

*And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.*

Footnote:

[1] You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: the Aramaic word kepa - meaning rock and transliterated into Greek as Kephas is the name by which Peter is called in the Pauline letters (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:4; Gal 1:18; 2:9,11,14) except in Gal 2:7-8 ("Peter"). It is translated as Petros ("Peter") in John 1:42. The presumed original Aramaic of Jesus' statement would have been, in English, "You are the Rock (Kepa) and upon this rock (kepa) I will build my church." The Greek text probably means the same, for the difference in gender between the masculine noun petros, the disciple's new name, and the feminine noun petra (rock) may be due simply to the unsuitability of using a feminine noun as the proper name of a male. Although the two words were generally used

with slightly different nuances, they were also used interchangeably with the same meaning, "rock." Church: this word (Greek ekklesia) occurs in the gospels only here and in Matthew 18:17 (twice). There are several possibilities for an Aramaic original. Jesus' church means the community that he will gather and that, like a building, will have Peter as its solid foundation. That function of Peter consists in his being witness to Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it: the netherworld (Greek Hades, the abode of the dead) is conceived of as a walled city whose gates will not close in upon the church of Jesus, i.e., it will not be overcome by the power of death.

*I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

Footnote:

[1] The keys to the kingdom of heaven: the image of the keys is probably drawn from Isaiah 22:15-25 where Eliakim, who succeeds Shebna as master of the palace, is given "the key of the house of David," which he authoritatively "opens" and "shuts" (Matthew 22:22). Whatever you bind . . . loosed in heaven: there are many instances in rabbinic literature of the binding-loosing imagery. Of the several meanings given there to the metaphor, two are of special importance here: the giving of authoritative teaching, and the lifting or imposing of the ban of excommunication. It is disputed whether the image of the keys and that of binding and loosing are different metaphors meaning the same thing. In any case, the promise of the keys is given to Peter alone. In Matthew 18:18 all the disciples are given the power of binding and loosing, but the context of that verse suggests that there the power of excommunication alone is intended. That the keys are those to the kingdom of heaven and that Peter's exercise of authority in the church on earth will be confirmed in heaven show an intimate connection between, but not an identification of, the church and the kingdom of heaven.

*Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.*

Footnote:

[1] Cf Mark 8:30. Matthew makes explicit that the prohibition has to do with speaking of Jesus as the Messiah; see the note on Mark 8:27-30.

- Matthew's Christology and Ecclesiology contained in two different but related events.
- After Peter confesses his faith in Jesus as the Christ, Jesus announces that his own church will be built on Peter.
- Setting: Caesarea Philippi - Roman grotto celebrating Roman history and Roman gods.
- Jesus asks how his message is playing among the people. The answers betray that the people think that Jesus is someone who has come back from the dead.
- John the Baptist: the memory of this prophet is fresh in the minds of the people. Even though his message was so different from the message of Jesus, there would be those who would be wishing for John's return.
- Elijah: was regarded as the mysterious prophet who "disappeared" and whose return was said to be the signal that a new age was about to dawn.
- Another prophet: All the prophets pointed to the "day of the Lord," the beginning of God's

reign.

- Simon Peter's answer has the added appellation: Son of the Living God.
- Play on words: "Petrus" and "petra." Security, surity, steadiness.
- Keys of the Kingdom: from the first reading we see that this means that Peter will not only be responsible for the possessions of God's reign but also who is allowed to go in and out.
- Power to enforce the law; not to legislate. Rather he interprets and binds or exempts from God's law.
- Jesus' question also betrays the fact that there were many different ways that people thought of the Messiah.

#### REGINALD FULLER

- Matthew has introduced considerable alterations into his Marcan source. The words "Son of the living God" are added to Peter's confession. In Mark, Jesus almost ignores Peter's confession and enjoins the disciple to silence. He then proceeds at once to speak of the necessity of his passion. Peter protests and is met by the rebuke "Get behind me, Satan."
- Matthew has placed the prediction of the passion, Peter's objection, and Jesus' rebuke in a separate pericope following the confession. Instead, Jesus pronounces Peter blessed and gives him the name Peter, "Rock."
- Then comes a series of promises: the building of the church on the foundation of Peter; the assurance that the powers of death shall not prevail against that church; the promise of the keys; and the saying of the binding and loosing.
- There seems to be a growing consensus that the original situation of these words to Peter was not in the earthly life of Jesus but in a post resurrection setting; that the whole passage, verses 17-19, enshrines very early material going back to the Aramaic-speaking Church; and that the Rock on which the church is to be built is Peter himself, not his faith, as some patristic and most Reformation exegesis has supposed.
- But there is division among exegetes along confessional lines over the question of the continuation of Peter's function in the church.
- Protestant exegesis sees the fulfillment of the saying about the Rock in the once-and-for-all role that played such a large part in the foundation of the church after the first Easter and resurrection appearances (Cullmann), and sees the power of the keys and of binding and loosing as continued in the church as a whole, though capable of being entrusted to particular officers by the community (Marxsen).
- Anglican exegetes tend to agree with the Orthodox that the power of the keys and of binding and loosing is shared by the whole episcopate, though many of them would be prepared to allow the Bishop of Rome a special place in this collegial office. Catholic scholars naturally maintain that the Petrine office is vested in the papacy.
- Nonetheless, it is significant that on all sides there is growing Christian awareness that one aspect of the Petrine office—witness to the resurrection—belongs to the events of the Christian beginnings and is therefore inalienable. At the same time, its other aspects—keys, binding and loosing—continue in the church. This continuity is a sign of the faithfulness of God.

#### JOHN PILCH

##### Jesus' Identity

- Today's familiar story takes on a very different orientation when placed respectfully in its

Mediterranean cultural context.

#### DYADIC PERSONALITY

- Americans are recognized as the most individualistic people who ever lived on the face of this planet. Each one strives to be distinct. In the United States, everyone has a personal social security number and many other distinctive and singular identities.
- Mediterranean people are exactly the opposite. Experts describe them as dyadic personalities. The word dyad means “pair.” Such people are other oriented to such an extent that they have no sense of their individuality but depend rather on the opinions of others to help them know who they are.
- Jesus’ question, therefore, is not a “theology quiz” for his disciples. It reflects a normal, Mediterranean curiosity by Jesus, a dyadic personality, about what other people think. Like everyone else in this culture, Jesus needs such feedback because he does not know who he is, and he is trying to learn this from significant others in his life.

#### STEREOTYPING

- In Jesus’ case, the question is particularly interesting because the normal stereotyping of that culture was not working. Jesus’ enemies feel satisfied in knowing him as “Jesus of Nazareth.” To know a person’s home village is to know everything about that person. All people in Nazareth were presumed to be alike. Nathanael’s rhetorical question, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46) simply echoes the commonly held, stereotypical image of that village’s inhabitants: worthless or no good.
- Another stereotypical identification of Jesus is “the stone worker’s or wood worker’s son” (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). The ancient wisdom observed, “like father, like son.”
- To know a family was to know everything about every member of that family. ““Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?’ And they took offense at Jesus” (Matt 13:55-57).
- True to Mediterranean form, Jesus’ disciples tell him what others are saying about him, and how others are perceiving him: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, another of the prophets. All of these are honorable if mistaken perceptions. But Jesus presses for Simon’s opinion, and he says, “the Messiah, the son of the living God.”

#### JESUS’ IDENTITY

- Jesus now has a rather large assortment of opinions to ponder. In gratitude to Simon for this information, Jesus bestows on him a nickname, Rocky or Peter. New names were regularly given at significant moments in a group’s life, especially to the more prominent members.
- In addition, Jesus promises that Peter will become like him, a broker who can provide access to God the patron. This is the significance of giving him the “keys of the kingdom.” Keys open doors, which is another way to describe a broker’s specialty.
- Over and beyond that, Peter is given a distinctive power to declare authoritative judgments (“binding and loosing”), something which appears to have been given to all the disciples in Matthew 18:18.
- If American believers read Jesus’ question here from the intense psychological perspective that dominates modern American convictions about self-knowledge and knowledge of others, they will assume Jesus knows who he is and is testing his friends to see if they know.
- If they use the Mediterranean scenario painted above, they will have to assume Jesus does not know and looks to significant others in order to find out. How will you read the passage?