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In this Gospel, we have today a main question, which touches directly our personal faith journey and our ecclesial commitment. It comes from Jesus himself and it is asked to his disciples; so it is worth hearing it: Who do you say that I am? Answering, re-answering this question, not knowing any more what to answer, not answering, changing our answer, or sensing a possible new answer, this is the basic story of our Christian life and discipleship. It is an unfinished quest, always open to new discoveries, to doubts and enthusiasms, and to new questions.

I want to look at it today on a particular angle: as a long journey with steps, as an on-going process, from a question launching the search for the face of Jesus to mission and service. It goes from the first question about what is being said of Jesus in our religious and cultural environment, and its diversity of paths and answers, some say Elijah or a Prophet, to the more personal question to the disciples calling for an honest and inner personal response, You are the Christ. But it does not end there, with the confession of faith; we often forget the third and fourth part, as important: there is a blessing, related to a revelation, Blessed are you Simon; and then the mission and authority given to Peter, I will give you the keys. It ends for Peter with the beginning of a new stage as disciple and as leader, in service.

The first step in the journey is one of exploration: from our own experiences and the people we met, the books and stories we read, the prayers and hymns we sang, the images we saw. So many faces of Jesus emerge from all this material, through 2000 years, and it will keep on: the prophet of the last times, the wise man, the spiritual master, the subversive revolutionary, my redeemer, the good fellow, the Sacred Heart, the religious reformer, the innocent victim revealing the truth,.. There are enough elements in the Scriptures to give foundation to all these faces and others. Myself, I had some times a more Matthean Jesus, the impressive glorious Lord of the mountain, then the radical and tough prophet of Mark, so close, or the joyful and merciful pilgrim of Luke. But I am basically a paulinian, Jesus is the crucified Messiah. Each of us, we probably have a main line, like a meridian, to guide us.



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In my youth, I remember two faces of Jesus that were in the air: the cosmic Christ of Teilhard de Chardin, very exciting, and the stark and poor Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, very attractive. Today is the feast of our O.P. sister Rose of Lima, first saint from the Americas: her Jesus has some blood on him, she was dedicated to the cross, but also he is related to universal fraternity and to her gardens and the creation. We can stay a long time in this exploratory space, moving from one face to another, following the last trend, coming back to an old one, and this is necessary.

We need to visit these many faces of Jesus. I did and still do it myself through the images, from icons to modern art, from the peaceful faces of Fra Angelico and Arcabas to the tortured ones of Grunewald and Germaine Richier. There is so much to discover, to admire and deepen in all this. Others do it through poetry and music.

But at some point, often a turning point, the question rises in a neglected room of our inner house or on a less traveled road and it becomes very personal: for me, now, who is Jesus? This needs some time, some reverence and contemplation. Often we cannot express the answer clearly, but it inhabits us and it finally comes out, beyond our assessments, feelings and insights. Like it happened with Peter, and with Paul. From some revelation. And at the same time, nobody can answer for me, and for each of us. Five years from now, it may be the same personal answer, but with a different tune or dance. And then comes the important affirmation of Jesus. Blessed are you. This answer is a source of happiness! Beyond our own works and days, our hopes and worries. Yes, blessed are we for this is a source of a unique joy. Nobody can take it away from me.

Now, we could think it is over. We got it. We have our own personal Jesus and nobody will take him from us! But it does not go like this. Because in the Bible, when there is a revelation of a face of the living God, whether in the desert, in a house, in a garden, on the road or the mountain, there is a mission that comes with it! This is a gift to be shared and to be involved with. Simon receives a new name, Peter, so this a vocation story, with a responsibility given.



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For Peter, it is the care of the ecclesia and the authority to do it. For Paul, it will be preaching to the nations, for Mary of Magdala the announcement to the disciples. When we proclaim our faith in the Risen one, the living Christ, there is a follow-up, a service we are called to. We become really a follower of Jesus, of his way, his community, his paschal journey. Following Jesus in the next chapters, from Caesarea to Jerusalem. With new challenges, new exploration and discoveries, new turning points, going back and forth, down and up, on this ongoing journey.

So, in the coming days, let us not forget the necessary explorations but also the personal encountering experience, and the blessing that comes with all this, and the joy that remains. And that any ministry, service, responsibility in the community and the mission is grounded on the confession of faith, for Peter and for all of us.

So, these days, we can let the question touch us, beyond and within our enthusiasms and indifferences, our apathies and fervours. Let us take some time to revisit our faith journey, the faces of Jesus that were more significant, the turning points we went through. And let us ask ourselves: to which service did all this led me in the past and calls me to now. Always remembering the blessing received. Amen.

Daniel Cadrin, O.P.