

Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.'

Peter's Faith Begins

Real Faith is not blind; instead, faith has been called *the virtue of the intellect*, wherein we believe that which we can not prove, but for which there is a great deal of evidence. Peter had spent 3 years looking at the evidence, walking and sailing with the evidence *himself*, hearing and seeing the evidence *himself*. He then declared belief but immediately showed the flaws in his Faith. He berated Jesus' plans for a horrible death. Jesus said,

that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Peter objects and is rebuked by Jesus. Peter wants a Messiah who will **not** be the fulfillment of the rest of the threatening prophesy of Isaiah 53. Here are verses 7-9:

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?

For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.

9 They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Peter's faith is still in its beginning stages. He accepts Jesus as Messiah but it will take Jesus' Resurrection for Peter to have faith that the Messiah is also God/Man.

Please prepare Saint Mark 9:30-37 for next Sunday.

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Saint Peter

UNKNOWN MASTER
German

1360-80
Wood, height 57,3 cm

Museum Mayer van den Bergh,
Antwerp, Belgium

Today's Gospel
Saint Mark 8:27-38

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✠ JESUS WENT ON WITH HIS DISCIPLES TO THE VILLAGES OF Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered (ἐπετίμω -- ep e **teem** o -- *rebuke*). them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke (ἐπετίμω -- ep e **teem** o -- *rebuke*). him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

The Fetters Come Off And Then Go On Again

Illness was anciently believed to be the work of Satan's forces who caused diseases in response to human sin. Satan and his henchmen were said to put chains or handcuffs on the People of God. In last week's Gospel, the healing of the deaf-mute, the literal Greek said *the fetters on his tongue were released*. In today's Gospel selection the "fetters" are released, at least metaphorically. Peter loses the fetters on his mind and tongue. He proclaims the Christ but almost immediately regains his chains, *disastrously*, and Jesus addresses him, '*Get behind me, Satan!*' Note the double use of the same verb (ἐπετίμω -- ep e **teem** o -- *rebuke*).

We are at what the scholars often term *the high point of the Galilean Ministry*. The apostles have been with him perhaps 3 years. They were touched by his presence and responded to his call

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to follow him to become fishers of men. You'll recall that Peter and Andrew dropped their nets and joined him at once. A few minutes later, at his call, James and John too left their father, Zebedee, *their uncom- plaining father(!)* with the hired men. They too followed Jesus. Later, Matthew, who had become an outcast and was called a traitor because he served the Romans, left his import/export tax booth by the Sea of Galilee and followed Jesus. Some of the others have touching conversion stories, like Philip who Jesus called to him and Nathaniel who was in turn called by Philip. He too came to Jesus.

The 12 have seen him heal a leper, another outcast, who could then rejoin his family. They watched him raise up Peter's fevered mother-in-law from her sick bed. In their presence he restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb and even gave full use of his arm to a man born with a withered arm. They have seen him raise a child from the dead, cure a woman who had suffered years of hemorrhaging, unsuccessfully treated by folk- medicine. Her condition made her an outcast, taboo to society. Thanks to Jesus she too could be restored to her family and friends. The apostles were themselves saved from what might have been death because he calmed storms. They were unable to do anything to help the hungry, but they watched him feed 5000 through the multiplication of five loaves and two tiny fish, Twelve coffin sized baskets of food were left over! Then they watched him do it again, for 4000 guests and seven baskets left over.

The apostles had spent three years reflecting on the Lord. They had the first opportunity to see Jesus as the early church did: *the fulfillment of the words in Isaiah 53: 3-5*

3 He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
4 Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
5 But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.. [© NRSV]