

## **XII Sunday: 2010**

### **Sacred Heart and St. Ann's Churches.**

"They" say that the next President of the United States is going to be a woman. "They" say that the next winter will be one of the coldest on record. "They" say that two heads are better than one. "They" say that if a rooster crows late in the day, rain is on the way. Surely you have heard of "They." It is almost certain that at one time or another you have referred to "They" when relating some bit of information in the course of a conversation. We know that "They" exert a tremendous influence upon what we say and do. "They" have a great deal to do with the shaping of public opinion.

When Jesus and his disciples had come to Bethsaida, they looked for a place to pray privately. At some point during their prayers, Jesus abruptly asked, "Who do they say that I am?" The disciples replied, "They are saying that you are John the Baptist. They are also saying that you are Elijah who came back to life and, if not Elijah, then one of the other prophets." But "They" are not saying anything about his being the Son of God. The thought apparently had not occurred to them. The disciples replied to Jesus' question on the basis of what they heard and observed.

Jesus pressed the matter further. "But who do you say that I am?"

No more reporting popular comments. No more monitoring of public opinion. The time had come for personal conviction to be declared loud. Jesus needed to hear the disciples express it. The disciples needed to hear themselves express it. The light was now turned up to maximum intensity, not upon "They," but upon the disciples personally. "Who do you say that I am?"

It is one thing to be able to quote theologians; it is another to be in possession of a theology. To know the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, adds to our faith. "Who do you say that I am?" Jesus asked. That is the question.

You and I have studied the Bible. We have read and listened to other people's beliefs concerning Christ. We know what St. Teresa of Avila believed. We know what Pope John Paul II believed. We know what our parents, relatives, and friends believe about Christ. We know what "They" all say. As a matter of fact, we do an admirable job of repeating what "They" say, especially if it serves us well in a conversation or may be offered in reply to a direct question in such a way that enables us to dodge expressing a personal opinion. But the unavoidable question, posed by the Christ, is always the same: "Who do you say that I am?"

**(1) Do not claim Jesus as Lord** while continuing to be bound to a temporal attitude about possessions. Because, one cancels out the other. One has to do with possessing. The other has to do with being possessed.

The rich young man described in Mark 10:17-22 fell on his knees before Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" We take notice that the young man did not inquire about how to get closer to God or how to be saved, or how to honor Christ. He was interested in eternal life, something else he could acquire. It is ironic that if he had asked how to embrace the will of God in his life, Jesus could have spoken to him of peace and security.

Instead, Jesus' reply caused him great distress; "... sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and then come, follow me." The man was devastated. The Scriptures say, "he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions (Mark 10:22)."

So now, what about your things? I don't know what they are; a family inheritance; your first dollar, a pocket knife you've had for years, a lucky charm, a string of beads with special meaning, the automobile that you take pride of. You have your things. That's all right, so long as they don't crowd out everything else, accumulate to the point of excess, or become too dear to part with.

We cannot be bound to Christ while continuing to be bound to a temporal attitude about possessions. One cancels out the other. "Who do you say that I am?"

**(2) Do not claim Jesus as Lord** while continuing to look at people and the world through the wrong end of a telescope.

Having attended morning worship at their church, the man and his wife were on their way home. "Henry," the wife said, "did you see that man five or six pews in front of us with that awful dress" Henry had taken no notice of anyone's dress. "Well, did you see all the plaster peeling off the ceiling right over your head?" Henry looked a little surprised and said, "No, I failed to notice that." They had not gone far when the wife thought of something else. "Henry, did you hear the woman sitting next to us singing awfully, trying to be heard above everybody else?" "No," replied Henry. "Well, you couldn't miss seeing the long thread hanging from the vestment of the Priest?" "Sorry dear," said Henry, "I guess I was trying to listen to the sermon, liturgy and missed all the other business." The woman then said, "Henry, sometimes it doesn't do you any good to go to church!"

Sometimes things those are serious. Sometimes, things those are not so serious. But still, we find ourselves looking at people and the world through the wrong end of a telescope. If your eye is fixed upon Christ Jesus, then all else comes into proper focus and perspective. The Scripture says, "If your eyes be single, your whole body shall be full of light (Matthew 6:22)." Jesus Christ cannot be Lord and things be out of focus. One cancels out the other. "Who do you say that I am?"

The two questions of Jesus remain the same even today: who do people say I am? And who do you say I am? Each of us will have to answer these questions for ourselves. Though they seem two separate questions, they are in fact very much connected. The answer to the first question depends on how we answer the second. When we know who Jesus is for us then people will know who Jesus is. The reason is, unlike 2000 years ago Jesus does not walk the earth physically but through those of us who believe in Him. It is we who reveal him to the world. It is through our words and our actions that those who do not know him can come to know him and recognize him as who he is. Let us try to make Jesus known by our lives.

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