

Who Do You Say I Am?

In the Gospel of Mark we encounter a very important exchange between Jesus and his disciples:

[Jesus] asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "**But who do you say that I am?**" - Mark 8:27-29 (NAB)

Let us focus on the second question of Jesus. It is not just aimed at the disciples. God inspired Sacred Scripture, which the Church has preserved for us, so that each and every one of us would be challenged by this most crucial question.

Notice that Jesus starts with the more general, "Who do people say that I am?" In our day the answers range from "a good and wise teacher" to "the Son of God." But Jesus makes it clear that what other people believe - whether they are atheists or saints - is irrelevant. He wants to know what *you* believe.

And it is not clear that a simple declaration of belief is sufficient:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."
- Matthew 7:21 (NAB)

So whether you answer, "Jesus is my personal savior," or "Jesus is the Son of God," it remains to be addressed what either of these answers *means* to you. How does the answer to Jesus' question impact the way you live? In what way does it "do the will of my Father in heaven?"

To answer the question of Jesus and to meditate on the meaning of that answer is an excellent spiritual exercise for Lent or at any other time of the year.

Let me provide you with an example of just such a meditation from the writings of the well known Protestant theologian and African missionary, Albert Schweitzer. It is the final paragraph of his classic study, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, published in 1906. It is a fitting reminder that the study of Jesus is not an end in itself.

**He comes to us as one unknown, without a name,
as of old, by the lake-side, he came to those men who knew him not.**

**He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me,"
and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time.**

He commands.

**And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple,
He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings
Which they shall pass through in his fellowship,**

**And, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience
Who He is.**

We encounter Jesus in our efforts to follow Him, to do the work he sets for us. Sometimes this results in the great efforts of a Mother Theresa or an Albert Schweitzer. But as St. Therese of Lisieux reminds us, the work Christ sets for us is often found in the ordinary acts of everyday life.

Use this passage as a meditation to identify the work that Christ has set for you.

S. Csontos, 3 March 2015.

(See attachment below.)

A Meditation on Jesus

by Albert Schweitzer

HE COMES TO US AS ONE UNKNOWN,

WITHOUT A NAME, AS OF OLD, BY THE LAKE-SIDE,
HE CAME TO THOSE MEN WHO KNEW HIM NOT.

HE SPEAKS TO US THE SAME WORD: "FOLLOW THOU ME"
AND SETS US TO THE TASKS WHICH HE HAS TO
FULFIL FOR OUR TIME.

HE COMMANDS.

AND TO THOSE WHO OBEY HIM, WHETHER THEY BE
WISE OR SIMPLE, HE WILL REVEAL HIMSELF
IN THE TOILS, THE CONFLICTS, THE SUFFERINGS WHICH
THEY SHALL PASS THROUGH IN HIS FELLOWSHIP,

AND, AS AN INEFFABLE MYSTERY,
THEY SHALL LEARN IN THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE
WHO HE IS.