

**24th Sunday in  
Ordinary Time  
September 15-16,  
2018**

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## **Living Catholic in the 808: Who Do You Say That I Am?**

**Very Rev. Msgr. Gary L. Secor, V.G.  
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Mark's gospel today recounts a critical moment in the teaching of Jesus and illustrates the ultimate purpose of that teaching. Jesus begins by asking the easier and, often, non-threatening question: "Who do people say that I am?" This is how sometimes we approach our faith; by recounting what others have said about God and God's teachings. But, as Christ illustrates, this is not enough if one wants to be an authentic follower of Jesus. We must answer the all-important question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answers correctly when he acknowledges that Jesus is "the Christ"; the anointed one who is the Messiah. Our presence here at Sunday Eucharist can also be seen as an acknowledgment that we believe that Jesus is God and Lord.

But, do we understand what that really means and what sort of Lord he is? It is obvious from what follows in today's gospel that Peter did not yet understand the implications of the lordship of Jesus. We can be guilty of the same misunderstanding. Peter, like many of his Jewish contemporaries, was expecting a messiah who would deliver people from their oppression and suffering by vanquishing their foes. Likewise, we can be expecting God to save us from suffering and our problems. But, as Christ clearly indicates, the only way to receive the crown of victory is through the cross. God does not offer us a detour around our problems and pain. God offers us a way through them. Isaiah prophesized that the savior would be a suffering servant who would experience "buffets and spitting". If this is the way that Christ lived, those who truly follow him should expect the same. If we try to avoid legitimate suffering, we are not engaging in godly thinking and we are being a "satan" or an adversary to God's plans.

As the Letter of James reminds us, suffering is not something that we have to go looking for. It will come to us if we have authentic faith. It will be present as we put our faith into action with concrete deeds of sacrificial love. It will happen when we are willing to lose our lives in the act of giving. It is the only way to obtain real and saving grace.

Today we are challenged to answer the all-important question Jesus is asking each of us: "Who do you say that I am?". And we are called to answer it by the way that we live the mystery of the cross.