



WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST  
CAMINANDO EN LA LUZ DE CRISTO  
MACHÉ LAN LUMIÉ AK JÉZHKRÍ

## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

August 24, 2008

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

### Gospel reading

**Matthew 16:13-20**

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi\* and he asked his disciples, "Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ\*\*, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld\*\*\* shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

\*Twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee. \*\* "Messiah" is a Hebrew word that means "anointed one"; its Greek translation is "Christos" from which the English word Christ derives. \*\*\*Greek "Hades", the abode of the dead.

### Brief commentary:

Today's reading has two parts. The first has Jesus asking the disciples who people say he is, and their answers. In the second part Jesus asks the poignant question, "But who do you say that I am?" and, on hearing Peter's response, Jesus blesses Peter and promises him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. This dialogue marks the beginning of the journey that will end in Jesus' Passion and death in Jerusalem. It is typical of Matthew to present Peter as the spokesman for the group and his answer reflects the hope shared by all the disciples that Jesus would deliver Israel from the hands of the Romans and establish God's kingdom on earth. Although Peter's confession of faith brings him a promise, it is obvious that none of the disciples, including Peter, has understood the true meaning of the Messianic mission. In a way that echoes the Gospel of Mark (see Mk 8:27-30), Matthew reminds us of Jesus' wish for his messianic identity to remain secret until its deeper and true meaning is understood.

#### Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- Peter's profession of faith is portrayed as coming through a revelation from God.
- Jesus' second question reflects his desire for a personal response from his friends.
- The binding-loosing metaphor means the giving of authoritative teaching, and the lifting or imposing of the ban of excommunication from the *ekklesia*.

### For our shared or personal reflection:

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

1. Do I see Jesus as a messiah who should give me all that I desire? The disciples thought that way and wanted a kingdom of success and power. Am I sometimes like them?
2. How do I answer Jesus' intimate question, "Who am I for you?"

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 153; 424; 439-443; 552-554; 1444.