

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

ROCK

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16: 13-20)

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Peter's public recognition of Jesus as the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi marks a significant turning point. Prior to this point Jesus' true identity has only been acknowledged by the world of spirits and by those possessed. In Matthew's account, Jesus rewards Peter's confession of faith with the acknowledgement that this is the rock on which the church will be built. This saying of Jesus rests on a significant play on words: the name Peter means rock.

Our image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi is *rock*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Matthew 16: 15-18; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'
Simon Peter answered,
'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'
And Jesus answered him,
'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,
but my Father in heaven.
And I tell you, you are Peter,
and on this rock I will build my church.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you build your church on Peter the rock.
Give us faith like his
that we may name you
as the Christ and Saviour;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Matthew 16: 13-20

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Matthew 16: 13-20)

Begin to explore Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- How do you understand Jesus' question to the disciples?
- What do you make of the disciples referring to John the Baptist, Elijah and Jeremiah?
- How do you understand Peter's response: the Messiah, the Son of the living God?
- What do you make of Jesus' response to Peter?
- What does this event at Caesarea Philippi say for us today?

Using your Bible

The event at Caesarea Philippi has its roots in Mark's Gospel. See how Matthew had added significantly to his source. See also how Luke deals with his event:

- Mark 8: 27-30
- Luke 9: 18-21

Compare how Matthew refers to Peter as son of Jonah with John's Gospel.

- John 1: 41-42
- John 21: 15-17

Explore images of rock in the Old Testament:

- Isaiah 51: 1-3
- Psalm 61: 1-3
- Psalm 62: 7

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Confession of Peter
- Peter in Matthew's Gospel
- Rock painting

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi is *rock*. Draw on your experience of rocks. For example:

- Reflect on your encounters with rocks.
- Reflect on qualities that you have observed in others that are rock like.
- Reflect on when your faith in God has been a rock for you.

What have you learned about rocks?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by the theme of Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi or by the image of rock.

- Collect small rocks and pebbles and use them to make a model of a church.
- Collect pictures of rocks to make a collage: Jesus said to Peter, 'On this rock I will build my church'.
- Paint rocks with relevant designs and images.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi or on the image of rock.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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