

21st Sun A Who Is Jesus?

Introduction...

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus ask his disciples,
Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

Then he asks them,
Who do you say that I am?

Here's a question for you, one you probably seldom ask yourself:
Who is Jesus... to you?

Refrain... Keep your eyes on Jesus

I Who Is Jesus?

Who is Jesus?
We have our catechism answers...
We know what we've been taught...
But who is Jesus *personally* to you?

Do you ever talk to him?
How do you address Jesus when you pray to him?
How often do you pray to Jesus... daily, once or twice a week, or just on Sundays?

Do you read much about Jesus...
his words, his teachings, and his actions...
who his friends were and how he interacted with them...
how he treated people, especially the sick and the "excluded"?

How would Jesus treat you if he were here today?

For some people Jesus makes only a Sunday appearance.
Jesus is someone "up there" whom we approach on Sundays,
but basically forget about the rest of the week?

Let's take a look at this person, Jesus.

Refrain... Keep your eyes on Jesus

The poetic beginning of John's Gospel puts it this way:

*In the beginning was the Word;
The Word was in God's presence,
And the Word was God...
The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us...
No one has ever seen God.
It is God the only Son,
ever present at the Father's side,
who has revealed him. (The New Am Bible, Jn 1:1,14,18)*

Another translation puts the last sentence this way:

*No one has ever seen God;
it is the only Son,
who is close to the Father's heart,
who has made him known.(The Jerusalem Bible, Jn 1:18)*

Jesus comes into the poor, wretched nation of the Jews.

God loved that nation.

They were God's special people,

God was ever faithful to them,

even though at times they were unfaithful to God.

Jesus was born into this special people.

Refrain... Keep your eyes on Jesus

II Celebrities

In Paul's beautiful Letter to the Hebrews Paul encourages the early Christians:

Keep your eyes on Jesus,

who both began and finished this race we're in.

Study how he did it. (The Message, Heb 12:2)

We live in an age of celebrities.

Whom does our society keep its eyes on?

Celebrities.

People Magazine, Super Market Tabloids, Entertainment Tonight...

these News sources tell us the foibles, failures and fortunes of the *Stars* –

what happened to whom,

who did what to whom,

who divorced whom,

who's getting married... again.

So many Americans never seem to tire reading about celebrities.

And so often it's Bad News...

not too uplifting, not too encouraging, is it?

We Catholics have to be careful lest we are seduced by celebrities and their way of life.

We have to be careful about keeping our eyes fixed on them.

Refrain... Keep Your Eyes On Jesus

III Whom Do We Fix Our Eyes On?

We Catholics have heroes... not celebrities.

Our saints are our other heroes.

They are not necessarily perfect,

but our saints are people who tried to be faithful to God,

to lead good lives,

to follow God's will,

and live lives of care and compassion.

Saints challenge us to rise above every day selfishness and self-centeredness... and the hum drum of `same ol, same ol.

Saints challenge us to respond to God's graces every day with gratitude. For what do you give thanks to God this day?

Who is your favorite saint?
Why?

Story: Saints Let the Light Shine Thru

The old cathedral was a site to behold with its ancient arches, ornate woodwork, and stained glass masterpieces.

The tour guide offered spiritual and cultural insights that satisfied most of the tourists.

But one little girl was curious about the people depicted in the windows.

"Who are those people?" the girl asked and pointed to a large and colorful stained glass window.

"Saints," the tour guide answered.

"Oh!" The sun was bright, the window large, and the girl was tiny in comparison. The sight overwhelmed her.

The tour guide began to move, but the girl was still awestruck and curious.

"Hey, wait," she called out. "What do saints do?"

The tour guide didn't want to spend time on a lesson about the saints. So he just said, "Saints do good things for God."

That evening before bedtime prayers, the little girl had an announcement for her mother.

"I know what saints do, Mommy. I know the good thing they do for God."

"Really. What is it?" Her mother asked.

"Saints let the light shine right through them."

You know, we are all called to be saints...
to let God's light shine thru us,
God's compassion and care, forgiveness and faithfulness.

Let's look at Jesus, our main hero... our Superhero.

Jesus

Remember the quote above from the poetic beginning of John's Gospel ...

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Jesus was the human face of God,
showing us what God is like.

Jesus also reveals to us what is God's will...
Jesus reveals God's love for us...
and Jesus reveals...
how we are to live our human lives as God wants us to...
what it means to be human to the fullest...
what God's dream for us is.

Jesus *cared* for others,
he was compassionate,
he was forgiving.

No arrogance,
no self-centered lifestyle,
He didn't use other people to further his own agenda.
Jesus was a man for others.

Read the stories about Jesus...
his care for the sick,
his spending time with sinners,
his encouraging the downtrodden.

People of his time flocked to see him, to hear him, to "touch the hem of his garment."
Why? Because he *cared* about them.

Refrain... Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Jesus was ever *faithful* to his loving Father.
He was a man of prayer, in touch with his loving Father.
Notice the times he went out early in the morning to pray,
to spend time with Father God.

This is what being human is all about...
and this is what our God is like... caring, compassionate, loving.

That's Jesus' message,
and he wanted to set the world on fire with that message.

Refrain... Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Jesus is our hero...
one who challenges us to rise above ourselves in a world of self-seeking and
self-pampering celebrities,
who capture the gaze of so many people,
telling us how we are to dress,
how we are to behave,
what is important in life.

These are not our Catholic heroes.
We can only pray for them, not to them.
We cannot let ourselves be seduced by them.

Refrain... Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Conclusion

Today Jesus asks each of us...

Who do you say I am?

May we respond...

Jesus, you are my hero,
Jesus, You show me what my God is really like.
Jesus, You show me God's will and God's way,
Jesus, You challenge me to walk in God's ways.

Jesus, Come into my heart at this Mass,
Jesus. may your very Body and Blood strengthen me to walk in your
footsteps,
may your presence in my heart help me to be
a person for others,
so that I may continue your work in my world,
in my family,
in my neighborhood,
on my job,
in my city.

Thank you Jesus for calling me to walk in your footsteps.
Amen.