

# FAITH AND REASON

**Who do you say that I am:** Caesarea Philippi lies about 25 miles north east of the Sea of Galilee. It was outside the domain of Herod Antipas, who was ruler of Galilee, and within the domain of Philip the Tetrarch. The population was mainly non-Jewish, and there Jesus would have peace to teach the Twelve. There are few areas with more religious associations than Caesarea Philip.

Jesus stands: In a place where the temples of the Syrian gods were in abundance. In a place where the ancient gods of Greece looked down. In a place where the history of Israel flooded the mind of man. In a place where the great marble temple was built by Herod the Great, the godhead of Caesar dominated the landscape.

And there, in this center of pagan worship, Jesus asks the question of pivotal importance: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

"Some say John the Baptist". Herod Antipas was not the only one who thought that John the Baptist was so great a figure that it might indeed be he that had returned from the dead.

"Others say Elijah". By doing so, they were saying two great things about Jesus: that Jesus was the greatest of all the prophets, for Elijah had always been regarded as the peak, the prince of the prophetic line... That Jesus was the forerunner of the Messiah, "Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the lord To this day, the Jews expect the return of Elijah before the coming of the Messiah, and to this day they leave a vacant chair for Elijah when they celebrate the Passover, for when Elijah comes the Messiah will not be far away.

"Others say Jeremiah" It was believed that before the people went into exile, Jeremiah had taken the Ark of the Covenant and the altar of incense out of the Temple and had taken them to a lonely cave on Mt Nebo, and, before the coming of the Messiah, he would return them, and the glory of God would come to the people again. One cannot but think that Jesus inquiring about popular opinion and was merely a preparation the most important question of all: "Who do you say that I am? You who are with me day after day, you who have heard me speak, you who have witnessed so many miracles, you who are my friends, my chosen ones.... Who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter alone answers and does so only by a special grace from the Father: "You are the Christ the Son of the living God". A book entitled, "Who is Jesus Christ" for me was published in Cracow in 1975. It contains hundreds of replies to this question, among which are following: "He fills my whole life" "He is one of us" .... "I know that he loves me" ..... "I see him in every human being." "He has taught me how to love." .... "Christ is the one who listens and answers". "A perfect example of man" "Christ is life, and these are not just fine words" "The most human of men". "A friend". "The one who commands by the example he sets." "The one who guides me." "The one I trust". "Boundless mercy" "Hope and mystery" "He is happiness" "He just is". "He is everything to me".

One cannot fail to notice the conviction which imbues these simple professions of faith. A conviction which may be generated by the emotions, by the mind, by a balanced or unbalanced combination of mind and emotions, by grace - directing the mind and emotions or being directed by them. Many "pious" people do not like to entertain such questions and dismiss them with an air of indifference. Such an attitude comes from neither wisdom nor virtue! And why?.... Simon Peter who was given a special grace to understand who Jesus is, and was reminded of this by Jesus himself, would later publicly disown Jesus. He would swear to it and do so three times: "I do not know the man". Let us take great care. "Therefore, it is not enough to say just once in life, I will believe. One has to go on saying it again and again, when things get difficult. Difficulties arise, times when one has to take up the cross daily. And Christ is not easy to accept, but he is truer than ever. When I bow to this truth, I feel myself the pupil of a really wonderful master. Too often I look at Christ with the eyes of this world. Often I think that 2000 years are an inseparable barrier, and I forget that God is not bound by time, but he comes at all times, and always comes in search of his creature - man. That having once come he comes all the time, even today".

Faith is a response to a call from God. The faith required of us is an unconditional faith. This should not be confused with what is commonly called a "blind faith". In reality there is no such thing as a blind faith. An act of faith is based on our knowledge of God, be it shallow or deep: our knowledge of God's love, God's mercy, God's forgiveness, God's providence. This is based on our personal experience in the family circle, school, associations, and of course on our spiritual life be it shallow or otherwise. A "blind faith" so called, is based upon some knowledge however limited it may be.

Fr Michel Quoist expresses it very well. Now, modern man is dissatisfied and forever searching for his promised land. When he thinks he has found it he stoops for a while, but not long enough for the fruit to mature. He picks the fruit while it is still green and bitter, and then, disappointed, he throws it away and blames the soil. And he continues searching for his mirage.

We carry our treasure in vessels of clay. That is to say, we who are frail, fallen human nature are involved in a war, that St Paul speaks so emphatically about "It is against the powers of darkness that we do battle": The enemy can trace its origin back to Adam and Eve - "the world, the flesh and the devil" St Paul - that highly intelligent, toughened realist makes it very clear that since the enemy is spiritual we must use spiritual weapons: faith, hope, love, humility, prayer, without which we must go down to defeat.. we cannot survive. Each new day that God gives us, let us begin again, as if for the first time. "If God is with us, who can be against us?"

One cannot fail.... Does conviction arise out of doing what others do, thinking as others think, behaving as others behave; how much are we influenced by the mass media as if they were a guide in morals and daily living - a voice on a par with the voice of God through his Church: the fads and fashions of a given era; peer pressure... **Fr. William C. Mooney**

**Gospel Mt 19:16-22:** A young man approached Jesus and said, “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” He answered him, “Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He asked him, “Which ones?” And Jesus replied, “You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

**Man was created for a certain end.** This end is to praise, to reverence and to serve the Lord his God and by this means to arrive at eternal salvation. All other beings and objects that surround us on the earth were created for the benefit of man and to be useful to him, as means to his final end; hence his obligation to use, or to abstain from the use of, these creatures, according as they bring him nearer to that end, or tend to separate him from it...**St. Ignatius of Loyola**

**Prayer for Peace:** Lord Jesus Christ, who are called the Prince of Peace, who are Yourself our peace and reconciliation, who so often said, “Peace to you” please grant us peace. Make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice, and brotherly love. Banish from their hearts whatever might endanger peace. Enlighten our rulers so that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace. May all peoples on the earth become brothers and sisters. May longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always over us all. Amen... **St. John Paul II**

#### **A Thought For the Day**

**Sunday** Jesus is living next to you, in the brothers and sisters with whom you share your daily existence.

**Monday** Let science tell us what and how. Let religion tell us who and why.

**Tuesday** Faith leads us beyond ourselves. It leads us directly to God.

**Wednesday** Wonder is the desire of knowledge.

**Thursday** You can't give God deadlines.

**Friday** The person who truly understands love could love anyone.

**Saturday** Nobody is so poor he has nothing to give, and nobody is so rich he has nothing to receive.

**Be Hid In Me:** Be hid in Me within My wounds, Within the Tabernacle of My heart. Nothing defiled can enter here, no fear, anxiety, or sin. So shed them all My precious child, lay them on My cross divine where you are cleansed from all that clings to spoil the treasure I have made. Enter into the Sanctuary, feel My life's blood flow. Be born anew made whole and pure. By My everlasting love for you. Be still in this place of rest and let Me teach you, feed you and set you free. For I have loved you since time began and I still love you now and till eternity, where you shall live in Me for evermore.

**Grant, O Lord my God,** that I may never fall away in success or in failure; that I may not be prideful in prosperity nor dejected in adversity. Let me rejoice only in what unites us and sorrow only in what separates us. May I strive to please no one or fear to displease anyone except Yourself. May I always see the things that are eternal and never those that are only temporal. May I shun any joy that is without You and never seek any that is beside You. O Lord, may I delight in any work I do for You and tire of any rest that is apart from You. My God, let me direct my heart towards You, and in my failings, always repent with a purpose of amendment.

**Happy the soul to whom it is given to attain this life with Christ,** to cleave with all one's heart to him whose beauty all the heavenly hosts behold forever, whose love inflames our love, the contemplation of whom is our refreshment, whose graciousness is our delight, whose gentleness fills us to overflowing, whose remembrance makes us glow with happiness, whose fragrance revives the dead, the glorious vision of whom will be the happiness of all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. For he is the brightness of eternal glory, the splendor of eternal light, the mirror without spot... **St. Clare of Assisi**

**Unable to Pray:** When the spiritual person cannot pray, let him learn to be still in God, fixing loving attention on God in the calm of his understanding although he may think of himself as doing nothing. Little by little divine calm and peace will be infused into his soul...**St John of the Cross**

**In His Will is Our Peace**  
**Fr. William C. Mooney**

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