Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

February 21, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:16).

Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle

1 Pt 5:1-4; Mt 16:13-19

Jesus chooses Peter to be the leader of the Apostles because he finds the Spirit in him.

Peter is in many ways an unlikely candidate because of his volatile personality and lack of conviction in a crisis, yet he steps forward from the others when he answers Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” His response is clearly inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is God who is actually choosing him. Jesus tells Peter, “This is not a matter of human insight, but my Father has revealed this to you.”

What Peter knows is essential for any follower of Jesus—that he is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Paul affirms this when he writes that only by the Spirit can we cry out, “Abba” to God and proclaim that “Jesus is Lord.” (Rom 8:15). A disciple is more than a member of the group, but someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit. The church is born of the Spirit, guided by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit to proclaim Jesus as Lord. Without this animating source, the church is only another human institution, a soulless corporation without a divine mission, organizing principle or purpose.

The ongoing renewal of the church requires us all to go to the wellspring of the Holy Spirit and draw forth its living water. It cannot be bottled, bought or sold. It cannot be channeled through some exclusive pipeline controlled and filtered by any human

agent. The Spirit is free to go where it wills, to inspire whomever it wishes. The Spirit can give charisms where there are no offices, call prophets from outside the institution, move through history like the wind, unpredictable and mysterious, full of surprises.

It should give us great encouragement to know that the Holy Spirit can work though human weakness, ordinary experience and limited intelligence, as God clearly is doing through Peter, a simple fisherman. We don’t need a degree in theology or an important title to know God and to do God’s will. In fact, Jesus seems to delight in how God reveals to little ones, mere children, what God hides from the so-called wise and clever.

But like Peter, we must follow Jesus to know him. We must be alert to the questions he poses to us in prayer, the mysteries he unlocks for us in our hearts and through our experiences. We need faith to receive more faith, but if we are open, God will build up the faith of others on our witness and example. This makes us all living stones in the great edifice of the church, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God in the world.

Advertisement