

The "rock" (v. 18) may be Peter's insight of Jesus as Christ ("Messiah", v. 16); that God does reveal to church leaders; Peter; or the disciples (if Jesus paused after the second clause of v. 18). Jesus gives Peter "the keys" (v. 19), the ability to unlock the mysteries of the Kingdom; they may also be a symbol of authority over the Church. In v. 20, Jesus "sternly" orders the disciples to keep the insight quiet, lest people grasp it in a political way. © 1996-2016 Chris Haslam

~ Notices ~

**Easter Vestry** - Notice is given that the Easter Vestries will be held on the following dates and places:

**Kilnasoolagh Church** - 15<sup>th</sup> September 7.30pm

**St Columba's and Christ Church Spanish Point** - 20<sup>th</sup> September after 11.30 service at St Columba's

**Resumption of Services** - A number of precautions are in place due to Covid 19 and we accept that this will mean some inconvenience and changes to our normal routine. Rather than worry people, we hope that these measures will reassure you that we are taking the anti-virus advice very seriously in order to ensure that your churches are as welcoming and safe as possible. The first few services will use a shorter liturgy with music but without hymns and Communion will also resume soon.

**Virtual Camino** - I shall be walking in August to raise funds for Focus Ireland, the charity that provides homes for the homeless across the country. We had hoped to plan a parish Camino walk to Santiago de Compostela in the next few months, but for now, that will have to wait. Meanwhile in Clare we have ancient pathways, holy sites, shrines, ruined cathedrals and churches, holy wells and islands to visit. I start next week on Scattery Island and then continue across five weeks or so. I am taking some holiday from 10<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> August and that should give me a chance to include some interesting routes that I will post on the Facebook page. €250 is the target, but if I can raise more that would be great! Please support if you can - Covid is bad enough for those of us with the safety of our own homes - pity those who have nowhere for shelter or protection. The link to the Justgiving page is on the front page of our website:

<https://clareanglicans.ie>

**Prayers** - Prayers are said daily for the welfare of our community, our nation and the world. If you have any particular issue that you would like to be prayed for, do please email me on [frkevinobrien@me.com](mailto:frkevinobrien@me.com) or call me on 065 672 4721.

**Online services** - Please note that these are to continue each Sunday, in addition to the regular meditations during the week on Facebook. During this time away our website <https://clareanglicans.ie> has significantly developed, so please do scroll down the opening page to explore the new sections and information. There are six new sections:

- Worship - a number of videos of services
- Pray - leaflets and resources on ways of praying
- Explore - videos of some inspiring speakers
- Think Question Believe - a parish podcast
- Viewpoint - videos on the basics of Christianity
- Rector's Blog - articles, thoughts, opinions

**Rector:** Email: [frkevinobrien@me.com](mailto:frkevinobrien@me.com) Tel: 065 672 4721

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# 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity (Year A)

Readings and Hymns

**Collect**

God of glory, the end of our searching, help us to lay aside all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom, and to give all that we have to gain the pearl beyond all price, through our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

**Suggested Hymns** - For the online service you might like to view these hymns with lyrics on YouTube.

- 1) Take my life and let it be  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11rReeWIs>
- 2) Psalm 138 - Westminster Abbey  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNqvpM2MFYM>
- 3) For all the saints  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rgwq7f2FpNk>
- 4) The Church's one foundation  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHCqXL3mCwU>

**Isaiah 51.1-6**

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,  
you that seek the Lord.  
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,  
and to the quarry from which you were dug.  
Look to Abraham your father  
and to Sarah who bore you;  
for he was but one when I called him,  
but I blessed him and made him many.  
For the Lord will comfort Zion;  
he will comfort all her waste places,  
and will make her wilderness like Eden,  
her desert like the garden of the Lord;  
joy and gladness will be found in her,  
thanksgiving and the voice of song.  
Listen to me, my people,  
and give heed to me, my nation;  
for a teaching will go out from me,  
and my justice for a light to the peoples.  
I will bring near my deliverance swiftly,  
my salvation has gone out  
and my arms will rule the peoples;  
the coastlands wait for me,  
and for my arm they hope.  
Lift up your eyes to the heavens,  
and look at the earth beneath;  
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,  
the earth will wear out like a garment,  
and those who live on it will die like gnats;  
but my salvation will be for ever,  
and my deliverance will never be ended.

**Psalms 138**

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;  
before the gods I sing your praise;  
I bow down towards your holy temple  
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love  
and your faithfulness;  
for you have exalted your name and your word  
above everything.  
On the day I called, you answered me,  
you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,  
for they have heard the words of your mouth.  
They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,  
for great is the glory of the Lord.  
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;  
but the haughty he perceives from far away.  
Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;  
you stretch out your hand,  
and your right hand delivers me.  
The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me;  
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever.  
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

#### **Romans 12.1-8**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

#### **Matthew 16.13-20**

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.

#### **Commentary**

##### **Isaiah**

This book can be divided into two (and possibly three) parts. Chapters 1 to 39 were written before the exile, from about 740 BC to about 700 BC. These were difficult times for the southern kingdom, Judah: a disastrous war was fought with Syria; the Assyrians conquered Israel, the northern kingdom, in 723 BC, and threatened Judah. Isaiah saw the cause of these events as social injustice, which he condemned, and against which he fought valiantly. Chapters 40 to 66 were written during and after the Exile in Babylon. They are filled with a message of trust and confident hope that God will soon end the Exile. Some scholars consider that Chapters 56 to 66 form a third part of the book, written after the return to the Promised Land. These chapters speak of hope and despair; they berate the people for their sin, for worshipping other gods. Like Second Isaiah, this part speaks of the hope that God will soon restore Jerusalem to its former glory and make a new home for all peoples.

##### **Psalms 138**

The psalmist expresses his gratitude for God's steadfast, enduring love and his care for his faithful followers, for whom he will fulfill his purpose (v. 8). Vv. 1-2 picture the psalmist in the courtyard of the Temple ("toward", v. 2) to offer thanks. For v. 2b, the Revised English Bible has: "for you have exalted your promises above the heavens". V. 3 tells of the psalmist's experience: when he called upon God, he not only answered but "made me bold and strong" (REB). Vv. 4-5 are a hymn of praise. The REB begins vv. 4 and 5 with "Let": may "all the kings" praise God when they hear his words; may they sing of God's ways, because (v. 6), exalted as he is, he cares for "the lowly" but takes note of the errors of the unjustly proud ("haughty"). Vv. 7-8 are an expression of faith, of trust and acknowledgement. In spite of his troubles, God preserves the psalmist, exercising divine power against his foes. (God's power is his "right hand", v. 7.)

#### **Romans 12:1-8**

V. 1 can be paraphrased as: I have been telling you about "the mercies of God" in the preceding chapters; therefore be obedient to God's will: present yourselves as a "sacrifice" (as in the sacrifice of animals in the Temple, i.e. completely), but one that lives: this is your worship of God; it involves your very being. We are, Paul says in v. 2, to be "transformed" by adopting a new mind set, in order to recognize God's will for us, by discerning that which is "good, ... acceptable [to him] and perfect" – rather than giving in (conforming) to the way of thinking in the world around us. We are to adopt a new starting point in our thinking. How? Because, through the authority and grace given to him by God, Paul insists that we should think of ourselves and use the gifts God has given us, as God has "assigned" (v. 3) to us – not as we or the world consider these gifts. All of us are members of the body of Christ, and each has particular gifts. Together we are "one body in Christ" (v. 5), and each is dependent on every other. For the benefit of the community, God has given us different gifts. If my gift is "prophecy" (v. 6, inspired preaching), prophesy to the extent that God has given me the ability; if "ministry" (v. 7, administration of material aid or distribution of alms), "teaching" (a distinct role in the early church), "exhortation" (v. 8, urging others to have faith), giving, or leading, do so properly. If my gift is being "compassionate" (v. 8), be so joyfully. Use the gifts God has given me, and restrict myself to these gifts. In the following verses, Paul illustrates various aspects of the general command of love.

#### **Matthew 16:13-20**

Jesus has warned his disciples about religious leaders who can foretell the weather but "cannot interpret the signs of the times" (v. 3); they influence others, leading them astray. The only sign of the new era will be his resurrection ("sign of Jonah", v. 4). Beyond the reach of Herod Antipas' spies, he is free to talk. He asks his disciples: who do people say that I am? Herod thinks that he is "John the Baptist" (v. 14); "Elijah" was expected to return at the end of time; "Jeremiah" foretold rejection and suffering. Jesus is seen as a prophet, a spokesman for God. When Jesus asks the disciples the same question (v. 15), Peter has a vital insight, which "my Father" (v. 17), not humans ("flesh and blood"), has revealed to him. Vv. 18-19 are particularly thorny, for they are overloaded with the issue of papal authority; I seek to avoid this issue. It is clear that: if Jesus spoke in Aramaic, "Peter" and "rock" are both cephas; in Greek, the words are petros and petra, so there may be word-play; Jesus switches from "Simon" (v. 17, the formal name) to "Peter" (v. 18, his nickname); "Hades" was the place of the dead, so the "church" will survive Jesus' death; in the Greek, "you" is singular throughout vv. 18-19; and "bind" (v. 19) and "loose" are rabbinic terms for forbid and permit in a juridical sense – in 18:18-19 these powers are conferred on any two of the apostles.