

# Twenty-first Sunday of the Year

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## Focus

A candle arranged next to or sitting on a piece of rock or stone.

## Introduction

As we listen to the New Testament accounts about the life and teaching of Jesus, it somehow seems incredible to think that the followers of Jesus could be so uncertain about his true identity. After all, the Gospels are filled with eyewitness accounts of the many miracles he performed, together with other marvellous experiences he shared with his closest friends (his Transfiguration, for example). Time and time again they were allowed glimpses of his divine power and glory. Yet in today's Gospel, when Jesus asks his closest friends, 'Who do you say that I am?' only one of them is able to give the right answer.

## Gloria

## Gospel Acclamation

Light the Gospel candle and sing Acclamation 5.

## Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (16:13-20)  
(See page 375.)

## Reflection

*Have you ever been asked a really difficult question?*

*How would you react if you felt unsure of the answer?*

(Encourage the children to think about times at school when their teacher might ask a question that they are expected to know the answer to!)

When people put us 'on the spot' it can make us feel uncomfortable and ill at ease. Sometimes we are afraid to reply in case our answer is wrong and then we might look foolish or feel stupid in front of others. We tend to hang our heads, avoid the gaze of the person asking the awkward question, and say nothing.

*When Jesus asked his disciples, 'Who do you say that I am?' how did they answer?*

They said nothing. Who knows what they were each thinking at that moment, but they could only stand awkwardly in silence.

*Which disciple declared what he thought, even though it sounded almost unbelievable?*

Peter boldly proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Christ or Messiah who had been promised by God.

*Why did his answer make Jesus smile?*

Jesus knew that the answer given by Peter had been revealed to him by his heavenly Father. This revelation and understanding allowed Peter to declare his faith in Jesus and to proclaim confidently before all that Jesus was the beloved Son of God who was living as a man among them. Jesus then knew to choose Peter to lead his Church on earth.

## *Why did Jesus compare Peter to a rock?*

Remind the children of the parable of the wise and foolish men who built their houses on rock and sand (see the Ninth Sunday of the Year, A).

Any building needs strong, firm foundations if it is to withstand the passing of time and being battered by wind, rain and storms. Jesus didn't want to build a physical church from bricks and mortar, but a 'living Church' from 'living stones' or people who share the same faith and love for him. If such a Church is to last and grow, then it needs to be built on a foundation of faith which is as strong and firm as rock. God had revealed to Jesus, that Peter was that very rock.

## Activity

Make a mosaic of cut-out people or faces to fill the outline of the shape of a church.

OR

Use coloured 'stones' or building blocks instead, with words such as love, understanding, peace, forgiveness, mercy and friendship written on them.

## Intercessions

As brothers and sisters in one loving family, together let us pray to our heavenly Father:

For Christians throughout the world;  
may they work together to build up the Church on earth.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For people who suffer for the sake of their faith;  
may they find the courage and strength to stand firm.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those blinded by doubt and uncertainty;  
may our love help them to see and believe in God's goodness.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the hungry, the poor and those in any kind of need;  
may our help ease their suffering.

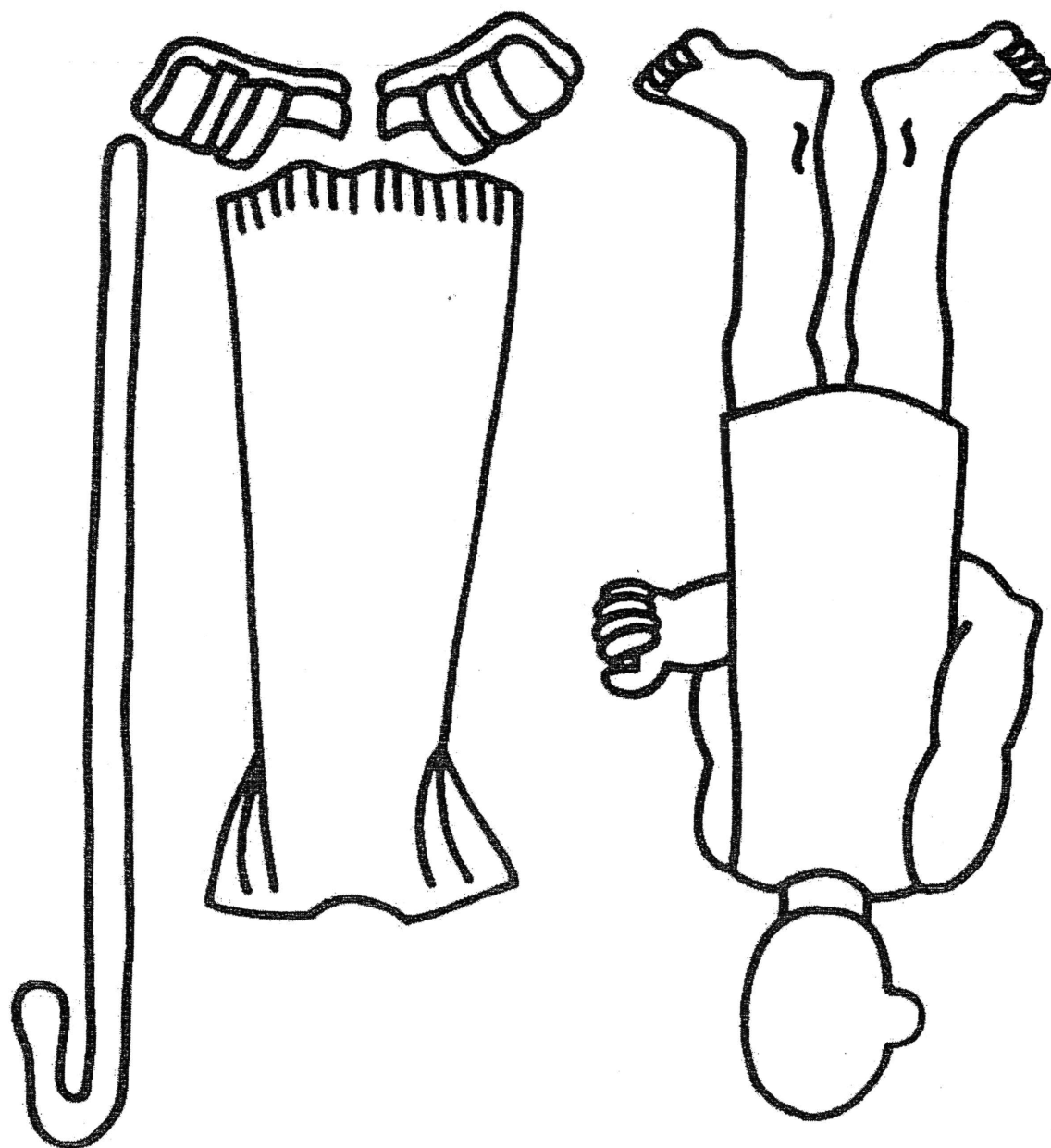
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening,  
in the silence of our hearts  
let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

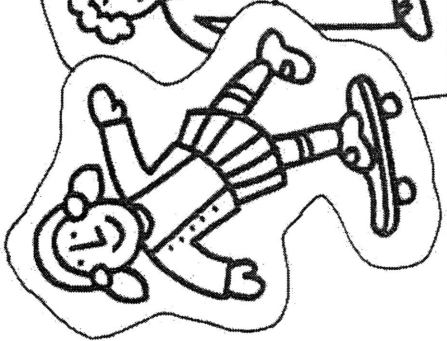
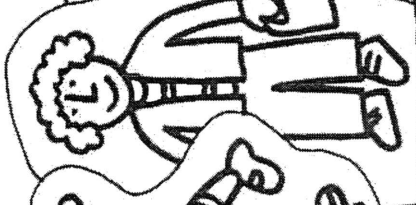
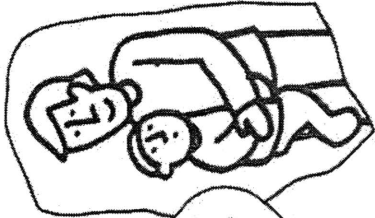
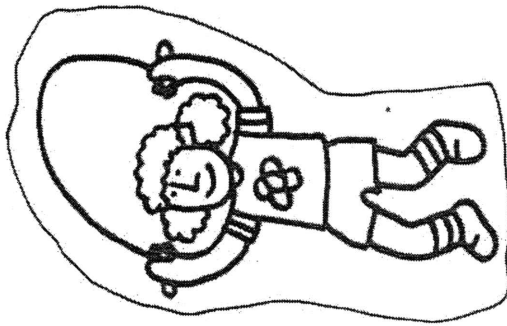
*Silence*

Loving Father,  
increase our faith and love,  
so that we might share your life  
and build up your kingdom here on earth.  
We ask this through Christ your Son.

**Amen.**



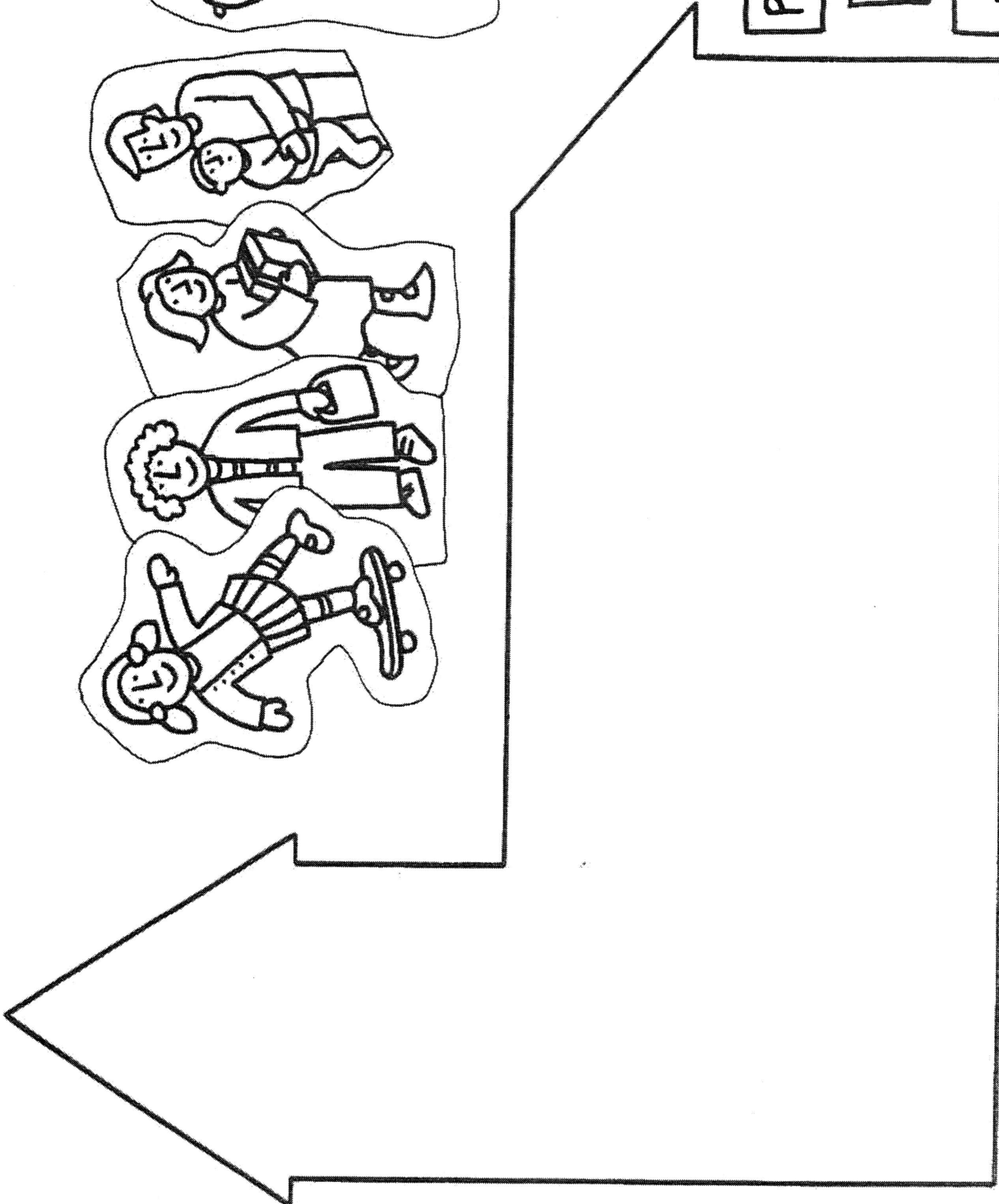
Peter knew who  
Jesus was



Peace

LOVE

MERCY



Jesus was delighted that Peter knew the answer!



Use the code to find out what Jesus said in Matthew 16:17

**SECRET CODE PAD**

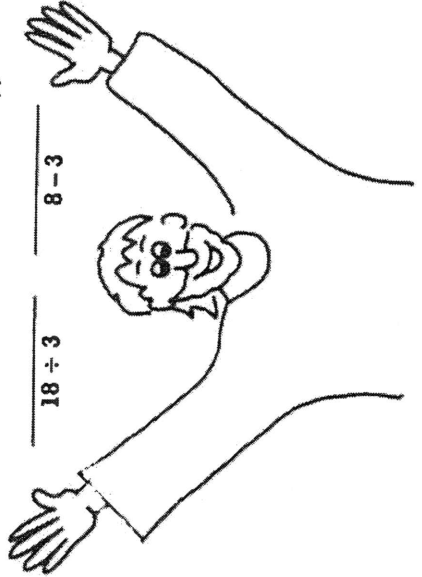
5 = YOU    4 = REVEALED    3 = THIS  
 8 = HEAVENLY    9 = FATHER    14 = HAS  
 12 = MY    6 = TO

“

$$4 \times 3 \quad 16 \div 2 \quad 6 + 3$$

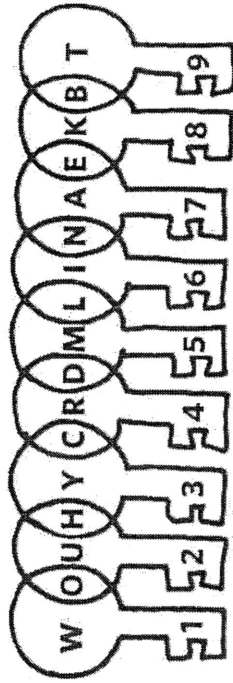
$$(3 + 4) \times 2 \quad 11 - 7 \quad 9 \div 3$$

”



Jesus told Peter that he would be given the “keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

Use the key code to see what Jesus said



“

$$3 \quad 1,2 \quad 2 \quad 7 \quad 4 \quad 7,8$$

$$9 \quad 2,3 \quad 7,8 \quad 4 \quad 1,2 \quad 3,4 \quad 8 \quad 1,2 \quad 6,7$$

$$1 \quad 2,3 \quad 6 \quad 3,4 \quad 2,3 \quad 6 \quad 1 \quad 6 \quad 5,6 \quad 5,6$$

$$8,9 \quad 2 \quad 6 \quad 5,6 \quad 4,5 \quad 5 \quad 3$$

”

$$3,4 \quad 2,3 \quad 2 \quad 4 \quad 3,4 \quad 2,3$$



## Twenty-First Sunday of the Year

### Who am I?

#### INTRODUCTION

Everyone knew that Jesus was a very special person! They had seen him cure the sick and blind, feed the crowds with a few loaves and fish, and do many other marvelous things. Yet, when Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" only one person knew the answer.

#### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read:

Jesus said, "Let your goodness shine like a light in the darkness, so that through you, the love of our heavenly father will touch the lives of others."

(Matthew 5:16)

#### SORRY

God is always ready to forgive us. Listen to this story:

Zacchaeus was a tax collector who was very rich because he cheated people out of their money. No one liked him, but Jesus was ready to forgive Zacchaeus and to offer him his friendship. Zacchaeus had a change of heart and was sorry for his dishonesty and selfishness. He promised Jesus that he would change his ways and try hard to be kind and loving to everyone.

(Luke 19:2-10)

Close your eyes and listen carefully to this prayer as you say "sorry" quietly in your heart:

Jesus, open our hearts

and make them more loving.

Like Zacchaeus, help us to change our ways  
and make a fresh start.

#### GLORIA

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 4.

#### GOSPEL (MATTHEW 16:13-18)

One day Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They answered, "Some people say that you are John the Baptist; others say that you are Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other

wise prophets of old." Then Jesus said, "But who do you say that I am?" The disciples were silent until Peter spoke up, "Master, you are the son of God." Jesus smiled at Peter and said, "My heavenly father has helped you to understand this. You are the rock on which I will build my church."

#### DISCUSSION

The people thought Jesus was a prophet. Do you know who the prophets were? They were wise men who spent their lives telling the people how God wanted them to live. The best known prophets in the Old Testament were Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Who answered Jesus' question correctly? How did Jesus know that this was a sign to choose Peter to lead the church? It takes a special light, given only by God, to let someone "see" or know in their heart, that Jesus is the son of God. In this way Jesus knew to choose Peter to lead the apostles and the church, after he had returned to heaven.

Does everyone in the world today believe that Jesus is God's son? Many still believe that he was just another prophet; others simply think that he was a kind and loving man who helped many people.

What do we believe about Jesus? We are filled with the Holy Spirit and the light of God so we know, like Peter, that Jesus is the son of God, the one that we must follow to find everlasting life.

#### ACTIVITY

Copy and give out this outline drawing of St. Peter. The children can add the details of his face with felt tip pens and glue on scraps of wool to make hair and a beard. Glue on the cutout garments after they have been colored, or use scraps of material. Add a staff to represent Peter as the shepherd of God's flock and church on earth.

#### CREED

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we believe  
that you are the son of God.  
Your love for us is so great,  
that you suffered and died for us.  
May the light of your love  
always burn brightly in our hearts.