

## Sunday 'Spiritual Communion' in Ordinary Time

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

### Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members.

**We are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.**

### Opening Sentences in the Season of Ordinary Time

Father God, you are the power of liberation, calling your servant Peter to lead your people the Church into freedom, and giving them the wisdom and courage to be called by your name.



**Be our Gate out from the land of injustice, and be the light that leads us to the perfect rule of love, that we may be citizens of your Kingdom and those whose names are written in your book of life.**

We ask this through Jesus Christ whose name is our salvation. Amen.

### Prayers of Preparation and Confession

**Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen**

We reflect for a moment on God's presence around us and in us.  
Creator of the universe, the sun and the moon, the earth,  
every molecule, every atom, everything that is:  
God is in every beat of our heart. God is with us, now.

You may wish to pray:

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy.**



A reading from the Gospel Matthew 16:13-20 (A reflection is attached to the end of the service sheet)

### Intercessions

Let us pray for the needs of the world, for our local community, and for those close to you.

End with the Lord's Prayer.

### **Our Father...**

Lord we ask for the grace to believe  
in what we could be and could do  
if I only we allowed God, our loving Creator,  
to continue to create us, guide us and shape us.

**O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

Holy One, Your voice burns within the depths of our being, God of our ancestors,  
and draws us into your presence and service.  
Hear the cries of your people and speak a word of comfort,  
that we may proclaim to all the earth the glory of your name. Amen.

### Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace of the Lord be always with you



## Reflection on Matthew 16 v 13-20

We continue our journey through Matthew this morning. In our passage today we are presented with a question of identity. The question of who we are is at the heart of a life of faith and is often what people are searching for in a life without faith. Who am I is surely one of the biggest questions in life.

The answer the Bible offers is not as black and white as we might wish. Our Gospel reading today offers an answer in a roundabout way. It suggests that what we are now is not what we always be! That there will be things added to and taken away from us in the course of our lives. In fact the very essence of our human existence and identity is a sense of transformation and becoming. The idea that change is both possible and inevitable no matter how young or old we are can be an exciting prospect or a frightening prospect. I wonder which is it for you? Do you ever wonder with Jesus what people think about you? This question of identity is central to our sense of being. Christian faith is rooted in the idea that this is part of a conversation between man and God. Take Moses at the start of the stories of faith when he asks the voice speaking from the burning bush who are you? And he gets the rather frustrating answer I am who I am! And we know Jesus was plagued with the question throughout His ministry .. who are you ask the Pharisees and the Roman governors and even His disciples.. and often He answers as He does this morning to Peter 'who do you say I am' ? The crowds and the disciples wonder who is this who does these things? Jesus' replied is that such a question must be answered by everyone individually.

What we find in the conversation between man and God is that the answer is not static .. change and transformation are at the heart of being alive. We are continually learning and understanding and becoming. For some that message brings with it a sense of relief that we are not the finished article .. we are not what we shall be. For others there is a sense of frustration and fatigue at the prospect of being required to constantly deal with change and transformation.

Perhaps the difference between embracing our changing identity and finding it burdensome is whether we are able to allow God to direct this change or whether we feel we are responsible for its direction ourselves. Peter would become the Rock ... but not because of anything he could say or do to achieve this. Like us he was being made into what God needed him to be.

When we view change as being self-directed it can become quite a burden .. I must do better .. I must do more .. I must be as vibrant and active as I have been in the past if I am to preserve my identity .. who I am is dependent upon me! We live in a time of self-help don't we. But the message of scripture is that the transformation in our lives is God's work .. and for us it is simply to allow what we are to be uncovered.

Christian transformation is more of a revealing of what is already there than a creation of something new. In this sense our role is one of surrender to being uncovered rather than an obligation to create something new or different. This is the essence of the message in our gospel. That what we are will be revealed and not covered over and what we have will be added to if we allow the Spirit to work in us.

As Christians we trust that when we surrender to God we are allowing our Creator to craft that inner being before the great day of reckoning when all shall be exposed.

