

**Confession of Faith**    The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle    Friday, February 22, 2019    1 Pt  
5:1-4;    **Mt 16:13-19**    (The Church is made up of those who believe the Father's Word and  
who live the Son's life in the Holy Spirit.)

**“Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

These are two statements: “You are Christ,” and **“You are the Son of the living God.”** Of the two the second is **far more important** because Messiah is really a rather generic term, simply means anointed.

Now it's true the Jews did await a specific, final **Messiah** at the end of time; but the role of the Messiah was not well understood. It was **the product of expectations and hopes**, and it was very muddy because the hopes of many and the expectations of many were for the most part **political and this-worldly**. But the second statement: **“Son of the living God,”** that's not political and that's not this-worldly. It is transcendental, meaning **it transcends all the normal categories** that people think with: Jews, Christians, secularists, Buddhists, anybody. **People don't think in the categories of real transcendence, as Jesus tried to provoke us or induce us to think in.**

Now there are all kinds of mystics that think about transcendental matters, usually in very vague ways, but Jesus is not vague. **Jesus is concrete.** His life is the way, as John's Gospel put it. **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** His life is the way. It's not vague. It's not abstract. It's not just an idea. It's a reality, and it's very concrete. This is how to live. **This is how to live as a son of God or a daughter of God.** This is how we do it. This is what it means.

And Peter recognized that. It's remarkable how clueless, for the most part, the apostles are in this case and in many cases. When Jesus says, **“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”** Son of Man is an indirect way of referring to himself, third person. And so the question really is about well what are people saying? And of course **they come up with an enormous amount of nonsense**, because people are full of nonsense. If you don't believe me, go on the Internet. Look at

any article and then the comments. There is rarely any insight in any of the comments. There is usually a great deal of emotion, **but not insight.**

So here Jesus is saying, “Well what do people think?” They come up with all this nonsense. Then, “**But what do you say?**” Now he is asking for a commitment, and it is Peter who speaks. But then Jesus points out, “Peter, that isn’t really your reasoning. That is not the result of your thinking, i.e. flesh and blood; that’s not your human thinking. That’s a revelation. That’s my Father speaking through you.” And this is what’s important to know that **the Church’s foundation is the Father speaking through witnesses, witnessing to the reality of Jesus, as the gift of the Father, as the way and the truth and the life.**

And when our thinking about the Church strays off into other areas, and we get involved in all kinds of other topics, we are very often missing the point. **The Church is founded on this rock of faith,** this confession that does not come from Peter’s own mind, but **is a revelation from the Father.** And we always have to return to the Father. **We have to ask for the Father’s Word. We have to look to the concrete life of Jesus: how he lived, what he did.** That is our model. And then we will be the Church; otherwise we are not the Church. We just may call ourselves the Church, but we are not the Church. **The Church is made up of those who believe the Father’s Word and who live the Son’s life in the Holy Spirit.**