

Sunday Readings

23rd August 2026

Collect

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 22:19-23

Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, 'Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: "I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station. In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his father's house." '

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 137:1-3,6,8 R/. v.8

R/. Your love, O Lord, is eternal: discard not the work of your hands.

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart:
you have heard the words of my mouth.
In the presence of the angels I will bless you.
I will adore before your holy temple. **R/.**

I thank you for your faithfulness and love,
which excel all we ever knew of you.
On the day I called, you answered;
you increased the strength of my soul. **R/.**

The Lord is high yet he looks on the lowly
and the haughty he knows from afar.
Your love, O Lord, is eternal,
discard not the work of your hands. **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Romans

11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 16:18

Alleluia, alleluia.

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
Alleluia.

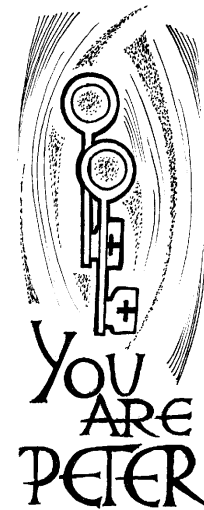
GOSPEL

Matthew 16:13-20

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

At that time: 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, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.



The Gospel of the Lord,
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer after Communion

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray,
the healing work of your mercy
and graciously perfect and sustain us,
so that in all things we may please you.
Through Christ our Lord.

The Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary Year A

The Word of God

Saints of the Week

Thursday 27 August 2026

Saint Monica (331 - 387)

She was born at Thagaste in Africa of a Christian family. She was married young, to Patricius, and among her children was Augustine. He had a brilliant intellect and uncertain morals and his wayward spiritual career saw him at one time a Manichee and then a Neoplatonist. With many tears she prayed unceasingly to God for his conversion and her prayers were answered shortly before she died. She had a deep faith and outstanding virtue and is a wonderful example of a Christian mother.

Friday 28 August 2026

St Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430)

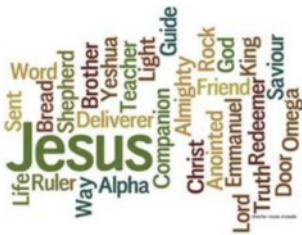
He was born in Thagaste in Africa of a Berber family. He was brought up a Christian but left the Church and embraced the Manichaean heresy, later seeing how nonsensical it was and becoming a Neoplatonist instead. He led a wild and dissolute youth. He took a concubine by whom he had a son, Adeodatus. He had a brilliant legal and academic career. At length, through the prayers of his mother, and the teaching of St Ambrose of Milan, he was converted back to Christianity. He was baptized in 387, shortly before his mother's death. He returned home to Africa and led an ascetic life. He was elected Bishop of Hippo and spent 34 years looking after his flock, teaching them, strengthening them in the faith and protecting them strenuously against the errors of the time. He wrote an enormous number of works: the Office of Readings has many extracts from them. He was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Boniface VIII in 1308.

Prayer of the Week

**A Prayer to the Holy Spirit
St Augustine of Hippo**

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.
Amen.

The question "who do you say that I am", is a question (and an answer) that echo down the ages, and the question is put to each one of us. Jesus says, "who do you say that I am?", and we must answer it.



It is a question that most people tend to shy away from. So often people want to keep faith at a distance so that it do not become a burden to them, causing them to question the easy ways that they

have fallen into – but it is a question that persists. It is so difficult just to dip your toe in the life of the church if there is a voice saying constantly to you, and to you personally, "Who do you say that I am?", because, if the answer, which we have to make for ourselves is the same as Peter's, "You are the Christ", then we are dealing with something which demands all of us, every part of our lives, because that is what Christ is asking for. But people do shy away from that commitment. They have a life which is sorted out with the strange series of checks, balances, and ordered compromises and do not want some Saviour coming and sweeping through their finely adjusted psyche like a bull in a China shop.

They are afraid, but they are wrong to be afraid.

And people try to negotiate a middle way, they always have and they always will, they try to avoid the total commitment which is the only currency that the Gospel deals in. Why do they do that? Well, possibly because they think of faith is the wrong way; they see it as a sort of intellectual and moral prison, a restriction on the fullness of human life. How wrong that is. The Lord who said, "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly," is not offering restriction, inhibition, misery, he is offering peace, freedom, fulfilment and joy. Be more ambitious for your faith, for heaven's sake. Expect great things of it, and great things will come, for the Lord is faithful to his promises.

Life in its fullness. What is stopping us?

Peter gets a disapproving press sometimes in the New Testament and, of course, renounced the Lord three times. However, one thing is not in doubt. He gave all of his wonderful and very human heart and soul to his Lord, and such wonderful things flowed from that that the Church is still talking about it. The same thing is asked of us as Christ asks us, day after day, the same question.

"Who do you say that I am?"