

August 24, 2014 – 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A  
*Who Do You Say I Am?*

Last week there was a news item in the paper.

It was reporting on Pope Francis' visit to South Korea.

The news item reported that the number of Catholics in that country has **tripled** in the last 30 years.

Millions of South Koreans are now Christians.

With news like that we can well imagine that some news reporter would be going out onto the streets to interview people.

The reporter might start by asking the same question Jesus asked in today's Gospel: "Who do people say this Jesus Christ is ... or what is he?"

Let me play the role of that reporter right here and now and ask you that very same question: "Who do people say this Jesus Christ is or what is he?"

*[Ask who would like to answer the question; ask for show of hands; go to several pews with the hand-held mike.]*

And our first person tells us: ...

*[After several members in the pews have given their answers:]*

Wow! So many good answers!

How many different answers do you think there are? 20? 50? More?

Let's go to today's epistle, St. Paul's letter to the Romans, to get a clue to that question and answer.

***"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!"***

Yes, we are not just talking about a movie star, a politician, a sports hero or some family member.

There is so much more to Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

We could say:

"Yes, but if I read all the New Testament about Jesus then I will come up with a list of all that we know about him."

Well, that may be true, difficult but true.

But Jesus is not just a person, a man, who has finite limits and characteristics.

We know Jesus as man and God.

We probably, in all due humility, know that we *cannot know* all there is about God.

Well, how much is there?

I like to use a mirrored ball to help us grasp that large number.

If we were to place one idea about Jesus, Son of God, on each of these little mirrors we would have many ideas ... but it *still* would not come close to exhausting *all* the truths about God.

Yes, someone will ask "How many squares do we have on the ball?"

The answer is "about 800" - lots and lots of words to describe Jesus Christ as Man and God!

Let's try something more manageable.

I would like to invite you to try something for your prayer life.

My suggestion is to consider one different *title or characteristic* of Jesus each day - for a month! Yes, a month.

I'll give you a list of *titles and characteristics* to work with each day.

Use that *title or characteristic* as a "prayer starter" for that day.

"A prayer starter?" you say.

Let's try an example.

Let's think of Jesus as "forgiving". It's one of the words on the list.

My suggestion would be to think of that word "forgiving" in the morning and ask yourself "Has Jesus ever forgiven me?"

"Did it happen more than once?"

"What was that experience like?"

Talk to God about that experience: "Thank you, God"; "I didn't really deserve your forgiveness"; "You forgive so easily; other people don't forgive so easily; I know that I don't forgive very easily" ...

If you have not had an experience of Jesus in the word of the day, think about it during the day; think about whether you would like such an experience; ask God for it!

Maybe it is evening time before you have time for that conversation.

The ushers are now going to pass out some prayer cards.

On one side is the list of 30 *titles or attributes* of Jesus Christ.

On the back side is the example I just gave you on "forgiving".

Maybe the word of the day brings to mind a song.

Sing it even if you are like me and can't sing well.

Maybe one of the titles for Jesus is one of your favorites. Enjoy!

Sing even more loudly.

For example my favorite word is "**Lord**" and the song that goes with

"Lord" is (variation on St. Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:10-11):

"He is **Lord**. He is **Lord**.

He is risen from the dead and he is **Lord**.

Every knee shall bend;

every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is **Lord**."

When to start this prayer exercise? Tomorrow?

How about September 1<sup>st</sup> so you can keep track on the calendar.

Are you a note taker? A journalist?

You may want to make some notes as you progress through the list.

Blessings on all of us as we try this prayer practice.