

~The Promise~

By Pastor Harris

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:13-16)

Who do people say that Jesus is? That depends on the person doing the saying doesn't? Jesus called all of The Apostles personally; only Saint Peter named Jesus The Messiah and Son of the Living God—as more than a prophet, ancient or contemporary, indeed, the fulfillment of prophecy the hope of Israel and mankind.

**For many are called, but few are chosen.
(Matthew 22:14)**

The call is the outward summons or invitation of God through His servants—prophets in the Old Testament, priests in the New Covenant in the blood of Christ. This call bids hearers to repent and believe the Good News of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a message or a method; it's a Man:

Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’ (John 19:5)

**Pontius Pilate pointed to the Savior, to the Man—
Ecce Homo—and his object evidently was to move
them and us to compassion, and to convince the
crowds, by a brutal sight of the Savior scourged, that
He was innocent. Hence, he brought Him forth with
the crown of thorns, and the purple robe, and with
the wounds of the whip. Amid all this, Jesus was
meek, patient, and calm, giving evident proofs of
innocence. The conduct of Pilate was as if he had
said:**

**See! The Man whom you accuse is arrayed in a
gorgeous robe, as if a king. He has been scourged
and mocked. All this He has borne with patience.**

**Look! How calm and peaceful! Behold His
countenance! How mild! His body scourged, His
head pierced with thorns! Yet in all this He is meek
and patient. This is the man that you accuse; and He
is now brought forth, that you may see that He is not
guilty.**

**It is possible to refuse, as many did and do.
Religious fanaticism has no compassion, only
brutality and law. The most volatile mix is religion
and politics.**

**Those who believe that politics and religion do not
mix, understand neither. ~Albert Einstein**

**Those who believe religion and politics aren't
connected don't understand either.
~Mahatma Gandhi**

**When religion and politics travel in the same cart,
the riders believe nothing can stand in their way.**

Their movements become headlong - faster and faster and faster. They put aside all thoughts of obstacles and forget the precipice does not show itself to the man in a blind rush until it's too late.

~Frank Herbert

Those who refuse the call are culpable for refusing it.

It is also possible to respond to this call in a non-saving way. Judas Iscariot was called. He responded to Jesus' outward call but never embraced Him as Messiah and Lord. How ironic that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss; even that was false affection. The result was tragic for him as it will be for any person who embraces the Body and Blood of Christ without conviction, without affection:

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Each one must examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)

St. Peter's confession does not come from him or any man but comes from above, from outside and beyond all human reasoning or understanding. St. Peter's confession comes from God as divine revelation. Revelation gives birth to faith in man.

Our Lord builds His Church on the man, not the confession.

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 17-18)

I offer this reflection on the call of St. Peter as a tribute to Reverend Father Alex J. Vargas on the occasion of his 18th Anniversary of Ordination as a priest of Jesus Christ.

A promise, a vow is only as good as the parties who exchange them. Marriages survive when couples endure in their vows to the end. Priesthood is the same.

Ordination to the Sacred Priesthood is a covenant, a vow, between a man and God in the presence of the Church's witness. We know that God is Faithful and always keeps His vow. Eighteen years have passed since that day at St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church when in the presence of the Most Reverend Maurus Muldoon, Bishop emeritus of Juticalpa, Honduras, Father Alex Vargas promised that he would configure his life to Christ Crucified in obedience to the Church's Teaching, alone, eschewing the comfort, companionship and consolation of a wife and family. He willingly chose to follow the Man of Sorrows, to walk it The Lord's Way:

**Jesus walked this lonesome valley.
He had to walk it by Himself;
O, nobody else could walk it for Him,
He had to walk it by Himself.**

**You must go and stand your trial,
You have to stand it by yourself,
O, nobody else can stand it for you,
You have to stand it by yourself.**

**Father's promise has stood the test of time and trial;
upon his confession, Christ continues to build His
Church against which nothing will prevail, not even
hell. I testify that God called Father Alex Vargas,
chose him as His priest, and prospers his ministry
today:**

**You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.
(Hebrews 7:17)**

AD MULTOS ANNOS

Pastor Julian Harris