

“What’s the Foundation?”

Those among us with a Roman Catholic background will recognize today’s Gospel Lectionary Reading because it is included in the Doctrine of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome. Since Peter is considered by the Roman Catholic Church to be the first Bishop of Rome, the affirmation Jesus gave following Peter’s declaration of him being the Messiah is viewed by the Roman Catholic Church, as a strong indication of the greater importance of Peter among the disciples. Obviously, the other branches or denominations of the Church do not agree with the Roman Catholic Doctrine of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome. Part of the argument rejecting that doctrine is the fact Mark and Luke do not include the additional affirmation of Peter by Jesus in their versions of the same event. Biblical academic scholars generally agree Matthew was closely tied to the disciple, Peter.

However, the Gospel of John reports Jesus giving to all the disciples the same authority, which Matthew’s report indicated he gave to Peter in response to the disciple’s declaration of Jesus’ Messiahship. Also, the Apostle Paul, in his letters to different churches, such as in today’s Call To Worship, wrote, how God through the sending of Jesus created a **“*stumbling block [or rock] for the Jews*”**, which testifies to **God’s Wisdom and Power**. Our Good News pew Bible translation, instead, uses the words **“*is offensive to the Jews*”**. Associating **“*rock*”** with the Body of Christ – the Community of the Church during the time of the early Christians, may or may not have been specifically connected to the relationship between Jesus and Peter. However, a **“*rock foundation*” for the Church** was clearly part of the identity of the early Christian Community. So, let’s take a moment during this Rally Day Sunday Worship Celebration to examine the nature of the **“*foundation*” for the Body of Christ – the Church**.

Today’s Worship Celebration includes a significant number of components – aspects, which we include on a very infrequent basis. With that being the case, today is a good time to examine how those special parts relate to the **“*foundation*”** of the Christian Community – the Church. They recognize or celebrate crucial elements of the **“*foundation*”**, which endures beyond death and time. The **Recognition of the Kids Eat Free Volunteers** reminds us of the tremendous importance of **living out the New Life in Christ by serving God, Jesus, one another, and those in need through self-giving – loving service**. The **Presenting of the Children’s Choir Awards** lifts up how **Music Ministry is closely tied to our identity as the Church**. Remember, in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians 14:26b, he wrote, **“*When you meet for worship, one person has a hymn, another a teaching, ...*”** The **Presenting of Bibles** reminds us of the **central role of Scripture in our understanding of God’s Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love for us, especially through God’s Son, Jesus Christ**. The **Presenting of Attendance Awards** to our children and youth in our Christian Education opportunities, along with our **Dedication of the Christian Education and Youth Staff** point to the **vital role of Christian Education for our identity as members of the Body of Christ – the Church**. The **Thankfulness Chain**, which the Sunday School shared with us lifts up the **central importance of Prayer to the “*foundation*” of the Community of Believers**.

Those expressions of our participation in the *“foundation”* of the *“Church”* – the Community of Christians through time and space declares – reveals our answers to Jesus’ questions, *“What about you? Who do you say I am?”* When we are involved in those important portions of our life together, then we, like Peter, testify, *“You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”*

Karoline Lewis continues to move us down the path of living on the *“rock foundation”* by pointing out, “Jesus’ question is that of extraordinary vulnerability. ...”

He’s asking on what you will wager your lives, the claim of your being. This is no benign question but has everything to do with who the disciples think Jesus is and more importantly, who they think *they* are. ...”

Lewis asks, **“This really is the question of life, isn’t it? Do you know who you are? Who you want to be? ...”**

Lewis concludes, “I want to hear Jesus’ question as less about certainty and more about inquiry. About imagination. About exploration. About possibility.” (“A ‘Come to Jesus’ Moment” by Karoline Lewis posted on www.workingpreacher.org)

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, revealed the possibility we have because of God’s Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love for he went on to promise, *“on this rock foundation I will build my Church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.”*

We who live out of the *“foundation”* of Jesus’ *“Church”* are empowered to share the **ultimate healing, reconciliation and forgiveness – eternal life in God’s fully revealed Kingdom** – in union with our Divine Parent and the Son of God!

What’s the foundation? Let us celebrate and recommit ourselves to live out the New Life in Jesus Christ – to continue to live out of the *“foundation”* of Jesus’ *“Church”*! **Let us Serve, Sing – Worship, Study, Teach, Pray, Heal – Reconcile – Forgive and Love – be Agents of God’s Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love! Amen.**