



**24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year B)  
Safeguarding Sunday**

**Homily**

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Archbishop of Perth**

**Sunday, 12 September 2021  
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

*Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am?* Jesus first asked this question of his disciples over 2000 years ago and he has been putting this question to his disciples ever since. He still puts this question to his disciples today. He puts it to us this morning.

When the first disciples of Jesus answered the first part of this question they indicated that many people who encountered Jesus were confused. Some thought Jesus was Moses come back to life, others Elijah come back to life, others again one of the other prophets come back to life. None of these answers, of course, was correct. Simon Peter answered the second part of the question on behalf of the other disciples in this way: *"You are the Christ"* he said. While most people were getting Jesus wrong Peter got Jesus right, or at least it seemed that way. Once Jesus started to explain that being the Christ would involve suffering and death, Peter was not so enthusiastic.

As Jesus puts the question to us this morning, it is possible that we, too, may not get the answer right just as many of our contemporaries do not always get Jesus right. Like so many at the time of Jesus, people today will often acknowledge that there is something special about Jesus. They will recognise him as a man of great compassion, love and mercy. Many will recognise him, in one way or another, as a man of God. And all of this is true, of course, just as it was true for the people of Jesus' own time to see in him someone who seemed to stand in the long line of the great prophets of Israel. But just as it is possible to get Jesus partly right, it is also possible, with the help of God's grace, to grasp the full truth about Jesus, as Simon Peter did when he proclaimed him to be the Christ. It was the faith of Peter, and it is the faith of the Church, that Jesus is the full and final fulfilment of all God's promises to Israel. He was and is, indeed, the Christ, the Messiah.

Another way of saying this is to acknowledge that when Jesus proclaims himself to be the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, we take him at his word. We recognise in him the revelation of the face of God himself.



The challenge, of course, for every Christian believer is to reflect deeply on just what we mean when we acknowledge Jesus as the Way which we are called to follow, as the Truth to which we are called to fully and courageously commit ourselves, and as the source of that fullness of Life which Jesus himself promised to bring. What does it mean for us today, here in this corner of the world in which we live, at this moment in history, to follow Jesus as our Way and as our Truth and as our Life, and for that very reason to turn away from any other paths, to reject any other claims to truth, and to stop looking anywhere else for the fullness of Life?

This is the question which every Christian must ponder, and I would even say confront, as we try to live out our lives as disciples. And it is a question which can be asked of every aspect of our lives as we live them out each day. It is the question we must face, for example, as together we celebrate Safeguarding Sunday at the end of Child Protection Week. What does it look like, in concrete, to care for, protect and safeguard children and young people, and to do so in the way of Jesus, and in accordance with the truth Jesus proclaims about the importance, dignity and sacredness of our children and young people? What does that look like in practice? It looks like the wonderful Safeguarding Project of the Archdiocese of Perth, which has now spread to all the Catholic dioceses of Western Australia. It looks like 260 volunteer safeguarding officers spread across our archdiocese in almost every parish. It looks like the wonderful publications that our Safeguarding Office has produced to keep the question and the urgency of safeguarding alive and practical in our families and communities. It looks like the courage and unstinting commitment of our Director of Safeguarding, Andrea Musulin, and the team who work with her to ensure that we make our parishes places of absolute safety for the young. In other words it looks like our response to the words of Jesus who once said, *“It is not those who **say** to me ‘Lord, Lord’, who will enter the kingdom of God but those who **do** the will of my Father in heaven”*.

To know who Jesus is, to acknowledge him as the Christ, to recognise in him the Way we should follow, the Truth we can trust, the Life which is the source of our life – all of this is a call to more than good intentions or fine words: it is a call to action. Our second reading expresses it well: *if someone is in need of clothes or food and we say, ‘I wish you well; keep warm and eat plenty’ but do nothing practical to help them, what good is that?’* As Saint Mary Mackillop once encouraged the Sisters of Saint Joseph, *“Never see a need without doing something about it”*.

As we celebrate Safeguarding Sunday at the end of Child Protection Week, and thank and congratulate all these generous and committed people who act as Safeguarding Officers in our parishes, may their practical commitment be a reminder to us that all of us, in our own particular circumstances, are called to translate our faith in Jesus as the Christ, as our Way, Truth and Life, into practical and concrete actions for the good of those who are, in any way, a part of our lives. For, as our second reading reminds us: *Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.*