

GOSPEL MEDITATION -
ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

August 23, 2026
The 21st Sunday
in
Ordinary Time

Readings:

Isaiah 22:19—23

Psalms 138

Romans 11:33—36

Matthew 16:13—20

The first time I stood inside St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, its majesty overwhelmed me. The sheer beauty of Michelangelo's dome seemed to lift my soul right out of my body. Later, I joined the Scavi tour that winds below the basilica,

down into the ancient pagan cemetery where Peter was buried. There, in the dim light and narrow passageways, I found myself looking at the bones of a murdered Jewish fisherman, his feet cut off so his crucified body could be taken down more easily.

What a paradox. Above me, the most glorious church ever built. Beneath me, the remains of a backwater fisherman. But this man dared to answer Jesus' question, **"Who do you say that I am?"** And crowning that immense dome above his tomb are the words from today's Gospel, **"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."**

Within you and me is the drama of the lowest and the highest. Every time we confess Christ, humbly, imperfectly, maybe even trembling, we enter that same mystery. The dust of our humanity, touched by the splendor of heaven. God's presence and our dry bones together. Humility and glory. May our lives embrace both the lowest and the highest, like that great basilica, as we profess Jesus.

— *Father John Muir*

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