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Today, in the Gospel, we hear Jesus skillfully seeking the disciple's understanding of who he truly is. It's as if Jesus wants to see if their faith is based on public opinion or based on the very presence of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus does this by questioning the disciples about who people think he is. And we hear them tell Jesus what the public thinks, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. But Jesus, more or less says, OK I've heard what public opinion says, now, tell me...who do you say I am? Peter then boldly answers, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." After this very bold and very profound confession from Peter, we hear Jesus say:

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. (Matt 16:18)

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Once again today, we hear of Peter's faith within our Gospel lesson. Today we learn that Peter, or Rock as the name suggests, is the very rock on which Jesus will build his church. So, what is it that Jesus is building on? We all know that Jesus is not going to literally build something on the physical body of Peter...his name may mean "Rock" but he is not a rock or the stone that can be built on. Moreover, this "church" that Jesus is looking to build is also not built with stones and mortar. The "church" Jesus is looking to establish is NOT a physical building.

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This might then raise another question...is it Peter's faith or is it Peter's righteousness? We can look then to the prophet Isaiah this morning in our first reading and find the answer:

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So what is my point in all of this?

My point is this...Jesus is referring to the faith of Peter and not Peter himself or Peter's righteousness that he has through his faith. I know this is an age-old debate that has long been a bone of contention between the Protestant, the Catholic, and the Orthodox churches...is it Peter's confession or is it Peter himself that the church is built on...or as I interpret it...is it Peter's faith or is it Peter's righteousness that is in question? This all has been settled to say that the church is established...PERIOD.

The church is built not because we have figured out its true meaning but rather, the church is established through or built on faith in Jesus Christ himself which is what gathers us, centers us, and is called into existence through the very faith that has been poured into each one of us who have gathered back then and those who have gathered through the ages.

As we gather today, we gather with the Saints of every time and every place and we are united with the ceaseless petition of Jesus Christ who called us into existence as His body. But this also raises another question for me about what is interpreted in the English language in today's passage as the church. The term interpreted as, "church," is actually the Greek term I mentioned earlier, *ἐκκλησία* which by definition is:

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The church is built not because we have figured out its true meaning but rather, the church is established through or built on faith in Jesus Christ himself which is what gathers us, centers us, and is called into existence through the very faith that has been poured into each one of us who have gathered back then and those who have gathered through the ages.

As we gather today, we gather with the Saints of every time and every place and we are united with the ceaseless petition of Jesus Christ who called us into existence as His body. But this also raises another question for me about what is interpreted in the English language in today's passage as the church. The term interpreted as, "church," is actually the Greek term I mentioned earlier, *ἐκκλησία* which by definition is:

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*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

A few weeks ago, I began my sermon by explaining the meaning of Peter's name in the Greek language. I went on to say that if my name meant rock like Peter's, I would not be climbing out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. But in that scene that Matthew set up for us a few weeks ago in the Gospel we heard Jesus also mention Peter's faith as he walked on the water. Even though Peter's faith was as Jesus said, "small" it was still enough faith to goad him out of the boat and onto the water until the wind whipped up and frightened him. And then that small faith within Peter was enough for him to call out to Jesus and sink safely into the rescuing arms of Jesus as he reached out to Peter. Then Jesus carries Peter safely back into the boat. We saw in this scene on the water that faith is not large or small; it is what saved Peter, it is what saves us all and makes us righteous before God and it is what gathers us all today into the rescuing arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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