

Homily

Isaiah 22: 19-23 and Matthew 16: 13-20

- *“I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his family.”*
- This is the last line from our first reading today from the prophet Isaiah. Normally, we find Isaiah speaking to other nations about God’s judgment coming to them for their misdeeds. But in today’s reading Isaiah is speaking to the corrupt leaders in his own country Jerusalem.
- In particular he is talking to a dishonest person named Shebna who is a religious leader and finance minister for the king. Isaiah says God will soon replace Shebna from his position of power and authority because Shebna is dishonest and not doing the will of God.
- Isaiah assures the people that God will replace Shebna with someone good and honest. Someone strong and consistent and trustworthy. Someone that has the peoples interest in mind and is there for them. That person is Eliakim.
- And to stress just how much the people can count on Eliakim to be a spiritual leader and honest custodian of the community’s funds, Isaiah uses an image people of that time could relate to well. He compares Eliakim to a peg in a sure (secure) spot.
- In those days people didn’t really have cabinets or closets in their homes the way we do today. Strong wooden pegs were fixed to the walls all around a room. The pegs were sturdy, and provided strong, reliable support for things to be placed upon. If something was on its peg, it was safe and secure. It was stored properly in the right spot.
- Isaiah told the people God would provide a “peg in a secure spot” for them. Someone they could rely on.
- And God does the same for us today!!
- So who in your life is that “peg in a secure spot”. Think about it a little.
- Who is the person (or people) in your life you know to be good and honest? The person that you go to for comfort, strength and strong support. Who is the person you count on – who is always there for you?
- It might be a parent or a spouse. It could be your child or a sibling. It could be a neighbor or friend or pastor.

- I am blessed to have several of these “pegs” in my life. My wife and children, family and friends. But I want to tell you about one of these pegs that is now home with the Lord: My mom.
- In the 1960’s my sister and I were what today we call “latch key” kids. My mom was raising us on her own. She had a clerical job at Citibank (back then it was called “First National City Bank”). When we were too young for school she worked nights to be with us in the day. When we were school age, she switched to work days to be with us at night.
- After school each day my sister and I would walk to the subway station at 4:30pm to wait for mom to arrive home. There was a candy store right near the subway station and we would usually coax mom into buying us a treat.
- One day we arrived at the station to learn there was an explosion and fire in the tunnel mom’s train travelled through. We waited and worried for what seemed hours. Some passengers were hurt and most had to walk through the tunnel to arrive at the station. Finally, climbing up the stairs in her white business suit, that was now covered in smoke and soot, was our mom. She smiled and said she was ok. I think we even got the candy.
- The very next day, despite being shaken and exhausted she got on a bus and went to work. A week later she was back on that same subway headed to and from work. She had a family to support, rent to pay, food to put on the table. For us *“a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his (her) family.”*
- So who in **your life** is that “peg in a secure spot”. Why not take some time today or this week to let them know what they mean to you. Give them a call, send a card, or shoot them an email.
- We might wonder how does someone get to be a strong peg for others.
- Today’s scriptures give us the answer. In our first reading Eliakim is a picture of Jesus, that strong peg we can all rely on, who is always there for us.
- In the Gospel Jesus asks His disciples: “who do people say I am”. They answer by telling Jesus some think you are Jeremiah, or John the Baptiste or Elijah come back from the dead.”

- Then Jesus asks them: “But who do you say that I am? Peter gets it right. He tells Jesus "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Or, in other words: You are the peg in a secure place.
- This is one of the most important questions in all of scripture. And it is a question we all must answer: Who is Jesus in my life? Our answer will make all the difference in how we think, what we say, how we treat others and how we treat ourselves.
- Jesus is **the most** secure peg in our life. He loves us dearly. We are precious to Him. He is close by and interested in us. He wants to be intimately part of our life, so much so He comes to dwell in us in the Holy Eucharist. He is our ultimate source of goodness and strength in this life.
- And in return for this loving relationship Jesus asks one thing.
- That we bring His love to others. That we be His eyes and ears and hands and heart in this world. He counts on us to let others know how much He loves them: by being that love in this world.
- By being that “peg in a secure place” for each other.