

Saint Hilary (c.315-367), Bishop of Poitiers, Doctor of the Church
Commentary on St Matthew's Gospel, 16

"You are... the Son of the living God."

The Lord had asked: «Who do people say that the Son of Man is?» To be sure, his bodily appearance made known the Son of Man but, in putting this question, he led people to understand that there was something else to be discerned over and above what could be seen... The object of the question was a mystery towards which the faith of the believer had to tend.

Peter's confession was fully recompensed as he deserved for having seen the Son of God within the man. «Blessed» is he, indeed, and praised for having penetrated beyond merely human sight, not looking to that which comes of flesh and blood but beholding the Son of God revealed by his heavenly Father. He was accounted worthy to be the first to recognise what it was in Christ that was of God. What a foundation he had the good fortune to give to the Church, on the basis of his new name! He became the rock worthy of building up the Church so that it might break the laws of hell... and every prison-house of death. O blessed gatekeeper of heaven, to whom were given the keys of entry to eternity! His judgement on earth becomes authoritative beforehand in heaven in such a way that what has been bound or loosed on earth becomes so also in heaven.

Jesus also commands his disciples not to tell anyone he is the Christ since others, namely the Law and the prophets, must be the witnesses of his Spirit, while witness to the resurrection belongs to the apostles. And just as the blessedness of those who know Christ in the Spirit was made known, so also was made known the danger of misunderstanding his humility and Passion.