

Scripture Study

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

(Ps 85:9-14)

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

Overview of the Gospel:

- The events related in this Sunday's Gospel takes place right after the multiplication of the loaves and fish we heard about last week. The events it describes are related in three of the four Gospels (see also Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:14-21).
- Jesus instructs his disciples to get into a fishing boat (probably Peter's) and head out across the Sea of Galilee toward Gentile territory, to the land of Gennesaret (verse 34; Matthew 8:28-34). While far out to sea in the barque of Peter, in the darkest part of the night (the fourth watch was between 3 and 6 A.M.), they battle a great storm.
- As they struggle against the wind and the waves, Jesus comes to them walking on the water. Whereas they were not described as terrified from the storm, they are now, as they assume Jesus is some sort of phantom (verse 26). Peter, however—always the impetuous leader—decides to step out in faith. Jesus allows him to proceed, then saves him when he takes his eyes off the Lord and his faith fails.
- Returning to the boat, the wind calms. The disciples had seen Jesus quiet the sea once before (Matthew 8:23-27), but now seem to recognize that the Old Testament credits God alone with mastery over the sea (Job 26:11-14; Ps 89:8-10; 93:4; 107:28-31).

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, what is the significance of how God appeared to Elijah? In the wind? In an earthquake? In the fire? In the still, small voice? Why in that order? Why is it important to know God as the still, small voice?
- In the 2nd Reading, St. Paul uses two witnesses to the fact that he is telling the truth. What are they? (see CCC 1783—1785) Why is it necessary for Christians today to use both of these two internal witnesses when testifying to something?
- In the Gospel Reading, why do you think Jesus wanted to pray alone? What was one of Jesus' concerns about his popularity with the people (see John 6:15)? How does public opinion and Jesus' response to it resemble that of the temptations in Matthew 4:3-10?
- What do Peter's actions reveal about his personality? Why do you think Peter asks Jesus to call to him? When did Peter begin to sink? Why then and not earlier?
- What do the disciples conclude about Jesus as a result of this experience?
- Would you be more likely to stay in the boat or step out of it? Why?
- What do you see in your own life that parallels Peter's attempt to walk on water?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2602, 448, 156, 547—548, 1335

Closing prayer

When we find ourselves in some grave danger we must not lose courage but firmly trust in God, for where there is the greatest danger, there is also the greatest help from Him who wants to be called our 'Help' in times of peace and in times of tribulation. ~St. Ambrose

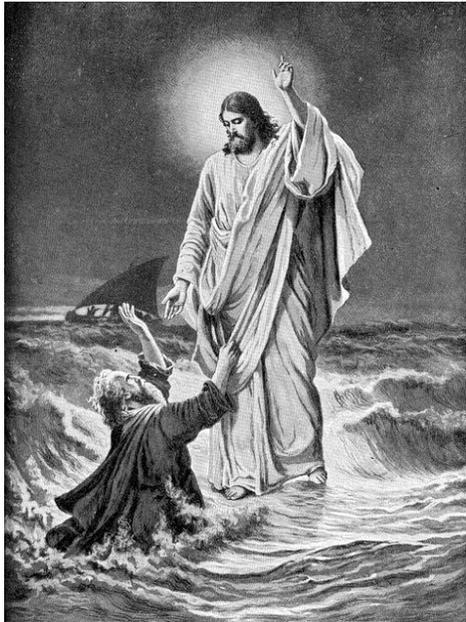
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Take heart, it is I; have no fear"

Scripture: *Matthew 14:22-33*

Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Meditation: Does the Lord seem distant when trials or adversity come your way? It



was at Jesus' initiative that the disciples sailed across the lake, only to find themselves in a life-threatening storm (see Mark 6:53-56). Although they were experienced fishermen, they feared for their lives. While Jesus was not with them in the boat, he, nonetheless watched for them in prayer. When he perceived their trouble he came to them on the sea and startled them with his sudden appearance. Do you look for the Lord's presence when you encounter difficulty or challenges?

This dramatic incident on the sea of Galilee revealed Peter's character more fully than others. Here we see Peter's impulsivity – his tendency to act without thinking of what he was doing. He often failed and came to grief as a result of his

impulsiveness. In contrast, Jesus always bade his disciples to see how difficult it was to follow him before they set out on the way he taught them. A great deal of failure in the Christian life is due to acting on impulse and emotional fervor without counting the cost. Peter, fortunately in the moment of his failure clutched at Jesus and held him firmly. Every time Peter fell, he rose again. His failures only made him love the Lord more deeply and trust him more intently. The Lord keeps watch over us at all times, and especially in our moments of temptation and difficulty. Do you rely on the Lord for his strength and help? Jesus assures us that we have no need of fear if we trust in Him and in his great love for us. When calamities or trials threaten to overwhelm you, how do you respond? With faith and hope in God's love, care and presence with you?

"Lord Jesus, help me to trust you always and to never doubt your presence and your power to help me. In my moments of doubt and weakness, may I cling to you as Peter did. Strengthen my faith that I may walk straight in the path you set before me, neither veering to the left nor to the right".

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