

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 13, 2023

Gospel: (Matthew 14:22-33)

When Jesus fed the people, he made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and the cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, "*Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.*" Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "*Come.*" Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Reflection:

This gospel does show Jesus as having authority over the waters: he walks on the sea and at his will the wind dies down. Nevertheless, this gospel is less about Jesus manifesting power in great events that it is an invitation to respond to Jesus, to come to him. We follow Jesus not because he is a great miracle worker but because he is the "Son of God." It is far easier to come to Jesus in the obvious things; for example, faithful attendance at Mass. It is far more difficult to see God in the little things; for example, being pleasant when the poor are demanding, or giving back to a cashier too much change, or giving extra time to be present to children or spouse. (Living Liturgy, p.212)

Vincentian Meditation:

When the disciples were terrified, Jesus immediately responded to them: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Jesus is interested always in trying to lighten our fears. When he comes to us in Holy Communion, he assures us that he is giving us everlasting life. That is a great assurance because the greatest natural fear which we have is the fear of death. Jesus can take care of that greatest natural fear, namely death, and he will also take care of those many other smaller fears which are hidden in our hearts. Some of these fears are known to us, others are not. To us, however, as to the frightened disciples, Jesus keeps saying: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 735)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

When have you heard Jesus say to you: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, in our fears and anxieties, may we always hear you say,

"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Amen.

