

## **08/09/2020: Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### **MATT 14:22-33 - 2020**

Today, we celebrate the nineteenth Sunday in ordinary time, and our gospel passage this evening/morning talks about the story of Jesus walking on the water. During the reading from the Gospel of Matthew, [Mt. 14:22-33] we heard that when St. Peter started walking on the water towards Jesus, he became frightened and began to sink. Consequently, he called out to Jesus, "Lord, save me!"

Some time ago, a couple asked for my urgent prayers. I was told that, while both were fully employed, being in severe debts, they risked losing their homes, everything they had worked for. They needed a miracle, a quick fix for their problem. They did not believe that their prayer, "Lord, save me!" would obtain a miracle. And so, they came to me to intercede on their behalf, hoping that the Lord would hear the prayer of a priest versus their personal prayer and that the Lord would have mercy on them.

We all prayed, and the Lord answered their prayer intention. The Lord saved them, but not the way that they wanted to be saved. They only wanted the Lord to provide for their physical needs. Instead, the Lord provided for their spiritual needs. After losing everything, their house, their land, their vehicles, after having been humiliated before their family and friends, after having declared personal bankruptcy, after having put an end to their wasteful spending, their high class living and their endless partying, they rented reasonable accommodations, settled down to a normal life and finally found the Lord Jesus in their lives.

When they had everything, they did not need Jesus. They had the great "ME," the "My way Lord or no way!" They never prayed. They did not have time to worship. They never received the Sacraments of eternal life. They had three goals: fame, wealth and the flesh. What a good life! At least they thought so, until their worldly kingdom came grumbling down.

The Lord saved them! He opened their eyes. Once blind, now they could see. He made them realize that while they were abundantly blessed, they showed no appreciation whatsoever for it. They were walking on the wide road of damnation.

The fate of this couple is not uncommon. Many people have no time for God. They are too busy managing their wealth. How often do we hear today of parents complaining that their children are living common-law? They do not practice their faith. They are walking the wide path of life, living a life of mortal sin, partying, doing drugs, neglecting their children, many of the grandchildren are no longer baptized, and so on.

What we see today is the fruits of a society that lacks morals, a society that has placed employment and fame before the family life, a society that has remained silent to the immoralities that were breeding all around them. Now, the people are crying out, "Lord, save me!" Do we honestly believe that the Lord will save such a society? Is this the kind of life that the

Kingdom of God is all about? Certainly not! To save this generation, the Lord must sanctify it! He must destroy this society in order to rebuilt it in His holy ways!

Our gospel is about the importance of keeping our eyes on Jesus. Faith is keeping our eyes focused on Jesus. Let me give you some examples. I think I am making the correct statement when I say: I believe Donald Trump is the President of the United States or I believe our governor of Texas is Greg Abbot or I believe our local ordinary of the Diocese is Bishop Joe Vasquez. These are verifiable facts and I know them and you know them as facts. We know these facts intellectually. What about when I say: I believe in Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. I believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead. Did you notice that in each of these cases, I used the word "I believe." In the case of Donald Trump, Greg Abbot and Bishop Joe, my faith in them could be verified; I know them as facts intellectually. But that is not the case with Jesus Christ. This is not an intellectual belief. It is much more than an intellectual thing. It is going beyond the use of intellect. Here we are talking about an act of religious faith. Here I am committing myself to a Person who is Jesus Christ and giving myself to Him 100%, an unconditional trust. This is the kind of faith we see in today's gospel.

Now the question is how do we grow or make this kind of our faith strong in our lives? It is by focusing on Jesus or keeping our eyes on Jesus? It is like driving a car. When we drive a car, first and foremost, we need to keep our eyes on the road," and not on the steering wheel or gas pedal (or accelerator). If we do not keep our eyes on the road or if we take our eyes off the road and look somewhere else, then we may bump into the vehicle in front of us or we may even go into a ditch. The same thing is true with our faith in Jesus Christ. We need to keep our eyes open and focused on the Lord. Sometimes we take our eyes off Jesus and look somewhere else especially when we are confronted with trials and tribulations of life. These are called the waves and winds of our lives; and they are: sickness, debt, poverty, family problems, inability to correct unjust conditions, difficulty to find decent work, apathy, temptation to give up in despair and many more. While Peter kept his eyes fixed or focused on Jesus, he walked on the water without a glitch; but when he took his eyes off Jesus and began to notice the danger around him-the waves and the wind, he became frightened and began to sink. So, today's gospel gives us an important spiritual message, and that message is that we need to focus our eyes on the Lord God at all times and to fulfill His will.

One thing I want to say about faith is, that, faith is not escapism. Faith does not mean that we can neglect or escape from our personal responsibilities and pray to God and believe that God will solve all our problems and difficulties in life. Yes, we must have faith in God, but we also must have faith in ourselves by doing our part. Remember the saying: "God helps those who help themselves." Saint Augustine puts it in another way. He says: "Pray as if everything depended on God; work as if everything depended on you." Keep your eyes open and focused on the Lord and do your part in the best of your ability. If you do that, when big storms and waves

come on your way, God is always there to help and rescue you. And this is the good news of today.

**Fr. Pius T. Mathew**