

Is Jesus a ghost? This question appeared in the disciples' minds while they were fighting the storm at sea and saw Jesus coming to them. Is Jesus a ghost? This is what Peter wanted to verify when he made his surprising demand: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

What is a ghost? Like a lot of other people, in every culture and in every time, when the disciples were afraid and saw something that they could not explain, they called it a ghost. Fear colored reality for them just as it does for us. In the middle of the night, after hours of fighting with the opposing wind, everything seemed dangerous and strange. Were their senses and their experience drawing the picture of the true world? Was feeling very strongly about what they saw really enough for them to trust their judgment? Christ offers a radically different possibility when he comes to them in the middle of the night with the words, "Do not be afraid." He enlightens the dark reality for them. Inspired Peter wants to be part of it. In a beautiful sign of trust he says, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

Old habits die hard. Somewhere at the back of Peter's mind, he knows that what he's doing is impossible. An experienced fisherman knows that one cannot walk on water in the storm. So he starts sinking. Even when he realizes how weak he is, he still stays faithful to Christ: "Lord save me." "Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?" It is faith that is the light for reality. It is faith that allows us to understand reality for what it is. Until this moment, we thought that faith is something that we must generate within ourselves. I thought that I could choose my version of reality. Standing next to the surprised and completely soaked Peter, I realize that faith is a reflection of God's love, reflected through my heart, my mind, my whole self. It is not faith in ourselves, either. Peter's adventure becomes a demonstration that it is faith in Christ that truly saves life and reveals reality. What an unexpected gift! It is not trust in my own persistence. It is not devotion to the structures and ideologies of the world. It is not some sort of fearful worship of the forces of nature. It is not even that everything around me should be immediately clear to me.

Faith in Jesus Christ connects us to the truth, to the most intricate structures of reality. The act of faith, expressed in the darkness of existence, is not a delusion of the tired psyche or a drug that I invent for myself to ease the pain of life. The act of faith in Jesus, as he passes by me in the middle of the night, is a courageous attitude of the soul that refuses to be overwhelmed by the storm. It becomes an act of hope that overcomes the darkness. It becomes the beginning of love that responds to the love already offered. "Do not be afraid. It is I." – "Truly you are the Son of God."