

Homily - Year 19 A - August 9, 2020

Here's a stupid question. When was the last time that you walked on water? Frankly, I doubt if anyone here has walked on water. If anyone has, I suggest that you keep it to yourself. Literature abounds with tales of people walking on water. Vergil's *Aeneid*, Greek mythology, traditions of Buddhism all have such stories. In all those stories, mere mortals could not walk on water. So, today, we sometimes attribute the ability of walking on water to accomplished people.

Well, Jesus actually did walk on water, not for his benefit or to show off. Rather, Jesus walked on the water to come to the aid of the disciples. Jesus appeared to ward off dangerous winds and to reach out to those in need..

Well, we too face struggles, struggles with ourselves, with our circumstances, with our temptations, and even with our own decisions. What do we do with our struggles? Well, it's clear from the gospel that we do not need to struggle alone because Jesus will lead us across the struggles of life. He stretches out his hand to save us, bidding us to take heart and have no fear.

But there is more to the story - Peter. The impetuous Peter, the one always ready to speak up, the one who pledged total loyalty to Christ, but then denied him three times. Peter was not a bad man. Rather, Peter's heart was always in the right place, but sometimes his brain did not follow along.

He acted on impulses, and those impulses led him to failure. However, failure does not end the story. He reaches out to Christ. For each failure in his life, Peter was able to get up and face life squarely. He was able to get up because Christ's hand was there to pull him out of the water.

Peter models for us the adage that a saint is not someone who never fails. A saint, like Peter, is one who, after a fall, responds to God's grace, gets up and moves forward.

But there is even greater meaning in today's gospel. Notice that the storm ceased as soon as Jesus got into the boat. Clearly, even in our lives, when Christ is present, the turmoil of strife, the daily anxieties, and the frustrations of major difficulties can be transformed because, as in the gospel, the presence of Christ can calm all fears.

So, where does that leave us? Well, frankly, we sometimes resemble Peter. We reach out to Christ, but then begin to sink because our faith weakens or because we begin to rely too much on ourselves. We need Christ in our boat of life. His calming effect on our lives can change turmoil into stepping stone to a greater life. The storms may be present. When we are in one, make sure that we reach out and grab on to a Christ who can calm every fear.