

19th Sunday- A 2014
Deacon Pat Hall

1 KINGS 19:9A, 11-13A; ROMANS 9:1-5; MATTHEW 14:22-33

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/081014.cfm>

The other day I was driving with my wife, Jan. She usually has confidence in my driving, but on this instance I pulled out quickly into traffic without much room to spare with an oncoming truck.

She retorted that I had not left her with much time to pray an Act of Contrition. That was her way of saying not only had I put her life in danger, but she hadn't had much time to prepare her soul for the here-after either.

Well, I felt bad for scaring her and so I inappropriately replied that the accident would have been on her side of the car. I did get around to appropriately apologize to her later and I will try to drive more safely.

I share this because it has something to do about fear and faith.

We heard in our Gospel of Matthew that the disciples were being tossed about in their boat by the violent wind and waves.

The Gospel records an earlier sea storm when Jesus was with them, but he was asleep in the boat. Then they awakened him and he calmed the storm.

This time, Jesus was not with them. The last they saw of him he was miles away on shore headed for some inland hill-top to pray.

Squalls on the Sea of Galilee could come up quickly with little warning. What started out as a promising voyage to go evangelizing, now seemed like it could result in their demise.

They then experienced a misty vision, something like a specter. In their fear of death they thought it was a ghost- a shade of someone once living who lingered on earth.ⁱ Their fear skewed their vision so much that they couldn't recognize the true presence of Jesus.

Peter did though. Even though Jesus was last seen on shore the previous evening, here Jesus could be seen doing what God does: walking upon the waters... undisturbed by the violent wind and waves.

Peter's faith, nurtured by his travels with Jesus, enable him to see the true reality of

the present Christ, the Son of God. Peter responded to Jesus' call to come to him. Peter had a little **faith**.

Now unlike Jan's misplaced confidence in my driving, Jesus can be counted upon to be always present, our savior and protection against fear and evil.

But Peter, like us, was a work in progress. As he ventured out into the dangerous waters he also entered into uncertainty. Of faith, he had a little. The terror of the sea eclipsed his confidence. Danger was all he could see. He lost his focus on Jesus and began to sink: "Lord, save me!"

(Well, that is something we could pray as an Act of Contrition if your husband puts you in a scary situation with no time to spare.)

"Lord, save me!"

And Peter found Jesus' sure outstretched hand.

The example of Peter is not that he was insufficient in his faith, but that Peter **did** have faith, his "little faith". He did respond to Jesus' call to come. Peter did step out into uncertainty. The point is that he was insufficient by himself.

Jesus calls. We respond. The Holy Spirit supplies.

Like Peter, we are all works in progress with a little faith. And like Peter, though insufficient on our own, we are being called to come to the ever-present Jesus Christ, to step out and venture into uncertainty.

By virtue of our common Baptism, we are also called to serve as Jesus' outstretched hands for others who venture into the deep and find them-selves sinking.

Three years ago, I requested the assignment to St. Mary's. Like a wispy vision of a specter, I saw Jesus calling me to this worshipping community. I had something to share with this family and neighborhood: Jesus. And this family and neighborhood had something to share with me: Jesus.

Like Peter, I stepped out from a safe place to do something unknown and different.

I had some sinking moments and will probably have some of those moments ahead of me. But I always found the outstretched hand of Jesus to save me.

Funny thing though, that outstretched hand looked an awful lot like you.

ⁱ John Shea, *On Earth As It Is In Heaven*, p. 247