

## Notes of the Homily      Deacon John Ragland

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT 08\_09\_2020 A

Does Jesus frighten you? Or, better put, does His perfect and divine will frighten you? Hopefully not, but sometimes it may, at least at first. This story reveals to us certain spiritual insights and the way we may react to the will of God in our lives.

First of all, the context of the story is important. The Apostles were on a boat in the middle of the lake at night. The darkness can be seen as the darkness we face in life, as we go through various challenges and difficulties. The boat has been traditionally seen as a symbol of the Church, and the lake as a symbol of the world. So, the context of this story reveals that the message is one for all of us, living in the world, remaining in the Church, encountering the “darkness” of life.

Sometimes when the Lord comes to us in the darkness we encounter, we are immediately frightened by Him. It’s not so much that we’re frightened by God Himself; rather, we can easily become frightened by God’s will and what He asks of us. God’s will always call us to selfless giving and sacrificial love. At times, this can be hard to accept. But when we remain in faith, our Lord will gently say to us, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” His will is nothing we should be afraid of. We should seek to embrace it with full confidence and trust. This may be challenging at first, but with faith and trust in Him, His will leads us to a life of the utmost fulfillment.

The first reading for today tells us that God was not in the winds, or the earthquake or in the fire, but Elijah encountered Him in the whispering sound, in the calm. Elijah hid his face in his cloak in awe of God. In our second reading today, Saint Paul loves Jesus so distinctively and he wants so much for his fellow Jews to love Jesus, too, that he was almost willing to sacrifice his love for Christ, if only those Jews who had rejected Jesus would come into the fold. Such great love for Jesus, Saint Paul shows to us. To sacrifice the love of the very person we need most in this world — Jesus Christ — for Paul — it must have been so painful to see his fellow Jews reject the Messiah that they had been awaiting for centuries — the Messiah anointed for them and for the world. Paul suffered many hardships for this Messiah and would ultimately give his very life for Jesus. Faith such as this, we can only hope to have in our lives.

In our Gospel story this day, Jesus saves Peter from literally drowning in the water as he walked on the water at Jesus’s beckoning, but Peter sank as he lost focus on Jesus. As Peter sank, he cried out to Jesus to save him, and Our Lord did just that. Jesus then gave Peter a mild rebuke for having so little faith. We

must have faith in Jesus Christ. Have faith that he is who he says he is and in what was attested by the Apostles in the boat — “He is the Son of God!” Have faith that Jesus will heal us from our sins and help us through all of our trials in this life. No matter what we face, there is nothing that we and Jesus together can’t overcome. Elijah demonstrated such faith in God! Saint Paul demonstrated such faith in Jesus! We must demonstrate our faith in Jesus by coming to know him more fully. Where do we come to know our Lord? We must take some time this summer to find Jesus in the quiet moments of our stormy and hectic lives. We can find him in the quiet touch of a loved one, in the breath of a cool breeze on a hot summer night, in the small light that breaks the morning darkness, or in the twinkling smile of a child. We can meet Jesus in all forms of created life and in all people, we encounter, if we would just take the time to recognize him. If we could just for a moment try to see Him in the poor and lonely and marginalized. If we could only see Him in those who may be different from us, as we take some time to get to know them, more than just on the surface. Jesus is the Lord God almighty, and if we saw him in all his glory, we would surely cower in awe and in knowing we are not worthy of him, yet he seeks us out to be in his loving presence in the calm of our lives, while helping us to overcome the storms we face in everyday life.

We will encounter Jesus in today’s Mass in receiving him in Holy Communion. Let us prepare our hearts for him and rejoice to be in his real presence. Jesus will be there for us no matter what circumstances, nor no matter how hard the times we are experiencing, as long as we ask him to be with us — he will be there, carrying us if we need that and helping us cross over our troubled waters — if only we would believe in him. Saint Faustina teaches us to say through her Divine Mercy encounter with Jesus: “Jesus, I trust in you!” O Lord, we pray that you will stretch out your loving hand and save us from the storms in our lives as we believe so very much in you and trust in your loving goodness! Jesus, help us to love as you love us and keep us always in your loving gaze! Help us to trust that when we see others — we see you. Whisper your love to us through the soft breeze as we negotiate our lives through all the noise and distractions.

Reflect, today, upon whatever our Lord may be calling you to do right now in your life. If at first it seems overwhelming, keep your eyes fixed on Him and know that He will never ask of you anything that’s too difficult to accomplish. His grace is always sufficient, and His will is always worthy of full acceptance and trust.