



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

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"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Matt 14:27

In this week's cherished Gospel narrative where Jesus walks on water, we hear that the boat that the disciples were told to board is to precede Him to the other side. But the boat is tossed about by the waves, because the wind was against it. The water represents the primal chaos of the deep. The boat represents the Church in a primal life and death battle with evil. We can surmise that this battle between good and evil is a providential call from God that summons the disciples to a deeper faith. The disciples must make the choice to leave behind the shore of their old life, and move toward their new life. In these life situations this churns the storms within us between evil and good.

As the boat sailed out to the deep, they last see Jesus climbing the mountain to pray. All was seemingly well until *"the fourth watch of the night,"* that darkest most fearful hour where hearts can easily sink into despair. That is when evil tries to overcome. We can surmise that Jesus, in making the disciples take to the sea alone and at night, is having them experience in their flesh the primal threat of annihilation. Then, in His total command of creation, He instills within them the faith where they can be witnesses of Jesus Christ as Lord of all, who draws order from chaos. This great privilege is befitting those disciples who are to become heralds of the inbreaking and coming of the Kingdom of God, here on earth as it is in heaven.

"During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea." Matt 14:25

At this point the disciples had been enduring the storm for about twelve hours before Jesus appeared. Scripture scholars concur that, in all likelihood, this demonstrates that the disciples needed to exhaust every earthly possibility of hope. They needed to be cleansed of their fear by first feeling it master their whole being. Once they abandon all hope, they come to realize they are ineffective in their own human power. They must be purged of their primal fear before the peace of Christ can dwell within them. *"Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'"*

Let's reflect this week on a time in our life when we were beat down by the seemingly unrelenting storm. We cannot avoid this law of spiritual life, that in order to come to the point where we can finally abandon ourselves totally to God, we must first feel abandonment by God in a *"dark night of the soul"* (St John of the Cross). In reality, He abandons us to the tyranny of our emotions and the stranglehold of our wild imagination of seemingly irreversible catastrophe. In our *fourth watch of the night*, then, in our cry for Jesus' mercy, the storm abates as Jesus appears. The calm at the dawning of a new day draws us to our knees in thanksgiving.

*Because Jesus Christ lives every fear is gone.
I know He holds our life, our future in his hands.*

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone.

Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea.

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.

At once Jesus spoke to them,
"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter said to him in reply,
"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

He said, *"Come."*

Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

The Gospel of the Lord