

Homily XIX Sunday of the Year
Mt. 14: 22-33
August 10, 2014 Saint Lawrence

Jesus says to His disciples: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

We all have something that scares us. It may be the common fears of public speaking, close spaces, or things like large crowds, snakes, spiders and yes, death. Many times fear can get in the way of something. But fear can also be something that helps us to escape something harmful.

In this morning's gospel, Saint Peter and the disciples are terrified when they see Jesus coming towards them on the water. Peter can't believe he sees Jesus in flesh and blood. The disciples think they are seeing a ghost. Peter, in his imperfect faith, asks Jesus to call him to himself. And the Lord calls Peter to Him. Peter climbs out of the boat and starts to defy nature and walk on the water towards Jesus. But when Peter "saw" the gospel says, "how strong the wind was he became frightened." It's interesting that Saint Matthew uses the word *saw* in referring to the wind. We tend to think of wind as something we feel. Peter saw the wind and therefore took his focus off Jesus and begins to sink. He looks in on himself. He tries to figure out how to save himself from death on his own. He forgets about Jesus. However, as he is going down Peter in desperation cries out to Jesus, "Lord, save me." Jesus, the gospel says, immediately stretched out his hand and saves Peter.

By his prayer and gazing upon Jesus Peter is able to walk on the water and he is saved physically from drowning in the sea. Peter and the others on the boat come to see Jesus not only as a friend but a Savior. When they proclaim Jesus, the Son of God.

Life brings with it many doubts and fears. We have many responsibilities and obligations that can sometimes seem overwhelming. We look at the world around us ravaged by war, poverty, hunger, terror and the sufferings and frustrations in our personal lives, sickness both physical and emotional, financial troubles, addictions. It can all seem overwhelming. We like Saint Peter, try to figure it out on our own. We turn our gaze away from Christ and look in on our own perceived power. But we can do nothing without Christ.

There was a parish priest who used to see a man sitting in the back of Church. The man would be there everyday. The man seemed to be just a regular guy. He would gaze at the altar towards the tabernacle. So, after several days the priest, who happened to be *Saint John Vianney*, asked the man what he was doing. You come in here everyday and just sit and stare. The man said, gesturing to the tabernacle. I look at Him and He looks at me.

Jesus is waiting to stretch out his hand to us everyday in the Holy Eucharist. He is here waiting for us. Our Catholic faith gives us the gift of the Holy Eucharist. We come here to gaze on Christ our peace to help us from our fears and anxieties. When we come to Mass we offer to God praise and adoration and we offer Him our prayers and crosses. At the solemn moment of the elevations of the paten and chalice, which contain

the real Body and Blood of Jesus, we offer our prayers and sufferings with the priest in this great sacrament of unity.

By our participation in the Holy Eucharist our hearts are transformed by grace. We are given the peace of Christ and we in turn are called to share this gift of faith and peace with the world. In our charity and actions we can transform the world by the grace we receive in this sacrament. Also, by our prayer and devotion before the Eucharist before the Tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved or in Solemn Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament we become more in union with Christ our most wise and best friend.

May we in this Mass pray for the grace to put our trust and focus on Christ in times of joy and difficulty. May we all grow in the charity and peace of Christ who came into the world to suffer, die, and rise again for us. May our faith and knowledge of Eucharistic Devotion mature along with our loving trust in Christ who calms all our fears.

Today the Church commemorates the feast of Saint Lawrence, deacon and martyr the patron of the founding monastery of our monastic community and Holy Patron of our Father Lawrence. Saint Lawrence a saintly witness of faith and courage in Christ by keeping his focus on Him when the Roman prefect ordered Saint Lawrence to bring him the treasures of the Church. Saint Lawrence defied the prefect and pointed to a crowd of poor people saying, "Here are the true treasures of the Church." Saint Lawrence died by being burned to death on a gridiron in 258.

Saint Peter, Prince of Apostles.

Pray for Us!

Mary, Queen of Peace.

Pray for Us!

Saint Lawrence, deacon and martyr.

Pray for Us!