Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

"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?" Matthew 14:27–31

Fear always clouds our vision. Today's Gospel takes place the night after Jesus fed the 5,000 on a mountain near the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, using only five barley loaves and two fish. Afterward, He withdrew to pray alone and sent the disciples ahead of Him by boat, directing them toward the town of Gennesaret, just south of Capernaum. While great miracles occurred the next day in Gennesaret, something just as remarkable took place during the night's journey across the sea.

The disciples found themselves rowing against a strong headwind, making the journey slow, arduous, and perilous This scene is a vivid image of our journey through life. Life is rarely "a bowl of cherries," as the saying goes. It can often feel laborious, filled with hardships, and some trials may seem never-ending. If life feels this way, today's Gospel is especially for you.

During the fourth watch of the night, between 3 and 6 a.m., as the disciples continued struggling against the waves, they saw a figure walking on the sea, coming toward them. While we may be familiar with the idea of Jesus walking on water, for the disciples, this would have been an unimaginable and terrifying sight. They did not recognize Him—not because His appearance had changed, but because fear blinded them. This still happens in our lives. We can misinterpret suffering or divine silence as abandonment. But Jesus allowed their fear precisely so He could confront it directly: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." In His divine wisdom, Jesus knew that countless disciples would read this story and ponder this moment until the end of time.

What message is He giving us? The courage that comes from recognizing God in our midst allows us to conquer fear—especially in our moments of suffering, when the path ahead seems hard, dangerous, and without end.

By a supernatural instinct, Peter utters the perfect prayer in this moment of uncertainty: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you…" When we recognize God amid our trials, focus our gaze on Him, and pray this prayer, God will always answer, "Come."

Peter sets the pattern for this bold, trusting prayer, but he falters in remaining faithful to it. Yet even this is allowed by God, for our instruction. Making an act of courageous faith does not guarantee we will not stumble. Peter sank not because he lacked faith entirely,

but because fear began to overwhelm his trust. And in this, Jesus teaches us another lesson: Even when our faith wavers, we must not give in to despair. Peter did not drown—he cried out once more, "Lord, save me!" and Jesus immediately reached out His hand.

Despair is the true enemy of faith. Though fear and the growing force of the wind weakened Peter's faith, he remained hopeful even in his weakness. And it was this hope—however trembling—that moved Jesus to stretch out His divine hand and save him.

Reflect today on any trial or suffering you endure that tempts you to fear. Confront that fear head-on. Rebuke it. Look for Jesus, who comes to you in the midst of the trial, walking on and through that very storm. Know that it is truly Him, drawing near. As you overcome fear, keep your eyes fixed on Him, not on the storm. This is what strengthens our faith and enables us to keep moving forward toward the goal: Jesus' hand of divine grace.

My saving Lord, though You permit trials in our lives, You always offer the grace we need to endure them patiently and to overcome them with trust and hope in You. Help me, Lord, to always see You in my suffering and confusion. May I never give in to despair, but instead grow in faith as I walk toward You.