

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, this story, as it is found in Matthew's Gospel, is also found in Mark's Gospel; however, the two stories have different conclusions. Mark's Gospel depicts the disciples of Jesus as hard-hearted; refusing to believe the evidence of their eyes as Jesus calms the storm after walking on the sea in the midst of the storm. He tells them: "Do not be afraid; it is I". These Greek words are the very words God uses to Moses in the Burning Bush: Εγώ Εμῖ; I am. It is the name in Greek for God! They have seen the Power of God in Jesus in the calming of the storm and the impossible scene of Jesus walking on the storm tossed waters; but they refuse to believe! We too must make up our minds about Jesus!

In Matthew's Gospel, the story takes a different turn. It is the same terrible storm. They are utterly terrified. Jesus comes to them, walking on the water. They think it is a ghost. Jesus replies to them: "Take courage. It is I." Peter responds: "Lord, if it is you, command me to walk on the water to you." Jesus tells him: "Come", and Peter gets out of the safety of the boat, and begins to walk on the water only to sink, and cries out: "Lord, save me!" In the conclusion of the story in Matthew, Jesus calms the storm, and they fall down and worship Him. Why is Matthew's version so very different and what does it have to do with us today? We too must make up our minds and decide our response to Jesus!

It is the same storm, but the responses to the storm, whether on the Lake of Galilee, or during the present pandemic, or any of the storms in life, our response to Jesus makes all of the difference. There are many today, who have allowed their fear to become cynicism, anger, or a casual disregard for the safety of others. They have become angry and hardened their hearts to the Divine Presence of Jesus, not just in the moments of calm, but also in the moments of danger and turmoil. They are part of the chaos.

On the other hand, there are those who have let Jesus come to them in the storms of life, and have placed their full trust in His Divine providence for them, stretching out their hands to Him in surrender to Him. That trust has led to a deepening of their faith in the presence of God in their lives, and they live it!

My beloved brothers and sisters, there is no doubt that we are in the midst of a terrible storm, not just with the pandemic, but also in the very fabric of society. It is ripping the nation apart. Like the Prophet Elijah, we too are called to come out of the cave and face the chaos, and find God in the tiny, small whispering of God in our hearts in prayer and adoration. Like Peter, we are called out of the safety of the boat into the storm, trusting that Jesus Christ is not a Ghost, that He is real, and His love for us is infinite and real. Like Peter, we are called to radically depend upon Him, once again, crying out to Him: "Lord, save me, for I cannot save myself!" Like the disciples, we too are called to recognize that Jesus is God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, and to give ourselves over to complete surrender to Him, who is giving Himself to us in this Eucharist- that is the meaning of worship and homage, and that is what we do in this Eucharist, and that is what we must do for others because of the Eucharist!