



Things to Ponder

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Homily Reflections – Gospel of Matthew 14:22-33

Introduction: [Get Out of Your Boat!](#)

Today's Gospel directly follows last week's account of Jesus feeding a crowd of more than 5,000 people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. For the sake of the crowds, Jesus had postponed his time of solitude. Now, at last, Jesus finds some time for quiet and prayer. He sends his disciples ahead of him by boat, dismisses the crowds, and then withdraws to the mountain to pray. *When do we find time to withdraw from our busy schedules to be with the Lord? Do we have a place? A time?*

The disciples do not fare well. Even as seasoned fishermen, they struggle to weather the wind and waves – making little progress in their journey across Lake Galilee. We are reminded of a previous story in Chapter 8 of Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus calms the seas. This time, however, Jesus does not calm the seas, and the disciples do not express fear until they see Jesus walking toward them on the water. In this story, it is not the storm that is feared but the sight of Jesus before them, whom they mistake for a ghost. He suddenly appears when they least expect him! *Can you identify a time when Jesus entered your life unexpectedly during a crisis? How did you feel? Surprised? Frightened? Relieved?*

Clues like these suggest that this story is about the disciples' growing understanding (perhaps unease?) of the identity of Jesus. He can also walk on water? He calls to the disciples and calms their fears. The impulsive Peter seeks proof that the person is indeed Jesus! He asks Jesus to call him out onto the stormy waters – and Jesus grants his request. However, Peter's fear and doubt overtake him once he is walking on the water. Peter's trust slips when he turns his focus from Jesus to himself! *Can you name a time when you turned away from Jesus? Lost faith? Doubted his love and grace?*

In the end of this poignant story, Jesus reaches out to Peter – and saves him. He pulls him in. The wind ceases. And the disciples in the boat confess that Jesus is the Son of God. What is striking is that there is no judgment of Peter. Just one big embrace! (Perhaps some laughter also?) *Have you ever experienced being "pulled in" by Christ?*

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the Gospel of Matthew 14:22-33.

What words or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

Other Probing Questions:

*Can you identify a time when you were fearful to step out in faith and trust?
What burdens make me feel like I might sink?
When you doubted God's presence, what renewed your faith and trust?*

Quote: There is always a call God asks each of us to engage in an act of trust. This is the walk of faith.

STORY: *"If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat!"*

Put yourself in Peter's place for a moment. You have a sudden insight into what Jesus is doing. He's inviting you to go on the adventure of your life. But at the same time, you're scared to death. *What would you choose – the water or the boat?*

The boat is safe, secure, and comfortable. On the other hand, the water is rough. The waves are high. The wind is strong. There is a storm out there. And if you get out of the boat—whatever your boat might happen to be—there's a good chance you might sink. But if you don't get out of the boat, there's a guaranteed certainty that you will never walk on the water.

If you want to walk on the water, you've got to get out of the boat. I believe there is something— someone—inside us who tells us there is more to life than sitting in the boat. You were made for something more than merely avoiding failure. There is something inside you that wants to walk on the water – to leave the comfort of routine existence and abandon yourself to the high adventure of following God.

So let me ask you a very important question: *What's your boat?* Your boat is whatever represents safety and security to you – apart from God himself. Your boat is whatever you are tempted to put your trust in – especially when life gets a little stormy. Your boat is whatever keeps you so comfortable that you don't want to give it up – even if it's keeping you from joining Jesus in the waves. Your boat is whatever pulls you away from the high adventure of following the Way of Jesus. —Rev. John Ortberg.

Getting Out of the Boat Questions:

*What's your boat? Where is fear or comfort keeping you from trusting God?
What's one risk you can take in your life that could help your faith to grow?*

Deacon David

Deacon David Suley
St. Patrick Catholic Church
Rockville, Maryland

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