

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This week we are given yet another wonderful account of an event in the life of Jesus. What more memorable image of Jesus is there than the one of him walking on the rough waters? And at the same time the disciples are by themselves on the Sea of Galilee, which is known for its sudden storms. Perhaps they were wondering whether they were going to survive.

Storms can be taken as a metaphor for those times in our life when we, too, are afraid. We can become very fearful when times are hard. It could be an illness, an injury, a loss of employment, the breaking of an important relationship, or a hundred other events that cause us to be concerned for our survival. Stormy times are inevitable, and many of the stories of Jesus can help us weather storms. What's important to remember is that we are never alone when we are dealing with difficulties. Jesus is there to assist us, as he helped Peter when Peter started to sink under the churning sea.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus certainly knows how to get people's attention. The panicked disciples are caught in a storm and they are afraid. They might have asked, "Where is Jesus when we really need him?" They look to see how close the shore is, when suddenly they see the most unexpected sight: Jesus walking atop the waves, heading in their direction.

The always-impulsive Peter is suddenly overtaken with the idea that he too might try this. He asks Jesus if it's okay for him to do a little wave-walking. Jesus says, "Come." (29) Peter slips over the side of the boat and onto the water, and for a few seconds, it appears that he can actually do it. He's probably thinking that they'll never believe this story back home. But then, the all too common fear surfaces and Peter begins to sink. Jesus reached out and caught Peter's hand and saved him.

So what do we have here? A great example of human pride that makes Peter think he can do anything, in conflict with the reality of his human limitations. Peter went beyond his limits and once he realized that, down he went. But there's something else: the saving reach of Jesus. We will all have our moments of "sinking," and that's the very moment that Jesus wants to help us.

Parent Survival

What's more common to a parent than "a stormy day?" We feel like we're slipping under water. We can also feel quite alone during these times. But that's never what Jesus wants for us. He offers a helping hand, a hand that will keep us from drowning in the trials of the day. But we'll have to reach out for his hand.

We are people of limits. We're not God, and we shouldn't try to be. We hear that some people may have "a messianic complex." Basically, this refers to a personal belief that one can "save the world," or given today's Gospel reading: quiet the raging seas. By ourselves, we can't do it. The role of Messiah has already been filled by Jesus. He is there to help us. So in asking for his help, it's like we're asking him to do his job. It's part of his job description. But he also takes delight in our asking for help.

by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Car or Meal Talk

Talk about a time when storms came into each one's life. We all have storms to deal with. Talk about them, so that family members don't feel they have to survive them alone.

One-Line Prayer

God of Trials and Wonder,
We reach out to you during our times of difficulty. Help us, like you helped Peter when he was getting in over his head.
Amen.