

Commentary for the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.



A teacher shared today's Gospel of Christ calming the storm with her nursery class in England. School was finished. There was a blizzard outside. The teacher tried to get the youngsters to their homes. As she struggled through the snow, she heard a boy say to his buddy, "We could use that chap Jesus right now." (William Barclay)

Jesus has just fed 15,000 with WONDER bread and rainbow trout. They want to make Him president and insure free daily catered meals. This retired priest advises it beats standing over a stove. He turns thumbs down on the job offer.

Jesus nixed the proposal to move into the Jewish Oval Office. Yet, the apostles thought it sensible. The problem with revolutionaries is not that they want to burn palaces. Rather, they want to move into them. (Wilfrid Sheed) They wanted Christ to become Top Man. They would ride with Him in stretch limousines and have cell phones. There would be no more sleeping on the hard ground but in five star hotel beds with Swedish mattresses. They would cease eating junk food and take their meals in gourmet restaurants. Their Dom Perignon champagne days would have begun and not a day too soon.

The only time Jesus met with politicians, His hands were tied and His back clotted with blood. (Philip Yancey)

The Nazarene picked off their naked greed and wanted to scotch it and not with Chivas Regal. He ordered His people to break camp and go to the other side of the lake. He would disperse the 15,000

and spend the night in prayer in the mountains. He needed to touch base with His Father. He enjoyed solitude. But how little He found! How He must have longed for the laid back days of Nazareth. But the last year of His life had begun. It would be all downhill. It was time to get His house in order.

The twelve balked. They were too close to winning the Lotto. Jesus had to twist their arms to make them leave. But they still delayed at the shore. They were hoping He would change His mind and accept the presidency. They could envision Peter as vice-president, Judas as treasury secretary, young John as secretary of state, etc.

Finally they pushed their large boat into the waters. They set sail for the western shore, which was 7.5 miles away. Hurricane winds came out of the north from the Golan Heights. Fishermen today will tell you with alarm they still do. What should have been a tranquil journey became a roller coaster ride. They were terrified. Instead of eating lobster, they would be eaten by lobsters. They were saying with that Brit boy but more intemperately, "We could be using that chap Jesus right now."

Up on the mountain, Jesus saw that His followers were about to become unwilling guests in Davy Jones locker. He forgot His problems. To His Father, He said, "Excuse me, Abba. This is action time." This Gospel catches the very essence of Jesus. Human needs surpass all other claims, even prayer, every time out. He has responded to the wishes of people for twenty-one centuries through His followers. He has no intention of stopping today unless of course we have.

As He walked across the wild waters, He spoke the spine-chilling line, "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid." Our Leader told us an astounding seventeen times in the Gospels not to be afraid. Notice today it is not advice. It is a command.

Jesus came on board. We know how the story ends. The apostles were in sheer shock. Job (8:9) had taught them, "Only God walks on water." Had there been a trauma unit about, the apostles would be patients. The day had been saved by the Master once again.

Despite Christ's command, many are troubled by conditions in the Church. Scandals afflict us. We hear of pedophilia among priests. The faith of our Christian company plummets like the stock market on a bearish day.

But this Gospel reminds us the Church has found itself in hurricane seas from day one. When we find ourselves breaking into a cold sweat over the latest scandal, we should remember those lyrical words of our Lord, "Courage. It is I. Do not be afraid." He will come to us walking on the waters. All we have to do is allow Him into our boat.

It is an historical fact, proved by countless thousands in every generation that when Christ comes, the storm becomes a calm, the tumult becomes a peace, and we pass the breaking point and we do not break. (Unknown)

Incidentally, next time you feel perfect, try walking on water.

Homily from Father James Gilhooley

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