**Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle A 2014**

August 9/10, 2014

1 Kings 19: 9a, 11-13a; Romans 9: 1-5; Matthew 14: 22-33

***“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”***

You have to be a bit daring to follow Jesus and be a member of his body, the Church; perhaps more than a bit. Actually, it takes courage and faith.

Imagine what Peter must have seen and felt that night on the sea He sees Jesus at a distance, and Jesus must have gestured to him is some way, telling him to come toward him, but Peter looked down and saw all that water that separated him from Jesus, water that was not calm, but stormy. Peter wasn’t going to risk being drowned for anyone except Jesus himself, so he said, “If it is you, Jesus, calling me, then command me to walk on the water.” And Jesus said, “It is I. I am calling you. Come!” For a moment or two, Peter’s courage and faith sustained him. He stepped out of the safety of that boat and he walked on that water, but then he lost his faith; he became frightened by the storm and the distance between him and Jesus. He couldn’t believe what was happening. He felt himself sinking and drowning and gasping for breath and ***only then*** to feel that grip, the grasp of a carpenter, rough and strong hands that saved him and pulled him up.

Yes, it can be scary for us too to step out into life, especially when all of life seems in turmoil. It can be scary for us as individuals, as a parish, as a diocese, as a Catholic Church to step out into the world. You have to have a bit of *hutzpah* in you. If you have the courage to obey his commands and become his follower, then you simply do not know what you will experience along the way. You will be molded and shaped by God and life. You won’t know what will happen ahead of time, but a few things are guaranteed. If you become Jesus’ follower, truly his follower, then you will become a very attractive person. Like we heard in the Gospel a couple of Sundays ago, you will be like a net thrown into the sea and you will catch many things, the good and the not so good, the old and the new. People are attracted to a real Christians. People are even more attracted to Catholic Christians. The Church gets a lot of press doesn’t it, both good and bad. Yes, it takes courage and faith to step out onto the waters to live life as Jesus commands us and to follow him and to remain a member of his Body, the Church. You will be both praised and ridiculed. You will be called both wise and crazy if you follow Jesus.

The Lord commands us all to follow him. As individuals and as a Church we must enter into the world, not avoid it. We must walk on the water, not hide in the boat. We must show our faith to the world, and not keep it in walls of this church building. We must go out to meet the world, as our Pope Francis so often tells us, a world that seems to be tossing and turning and in such turmoil, a world that will mock us and praise us. We must not shelter ourselves from it, but go out on the water, always with faith, always with courage, always relying, as Peter did, on the Lord, praying, “Lord save me!”

My friends, to follow Jesus can be difficult. We can easily become frightened yet God calls us to come to him and the only way to go to him is across water. We have to walk in faith and not just sit back and wait for better days, for the storms to stop, and ***we can do it*** because just as Jesus reached out and grasped Peter by the hand and pulled him up from the storming seas, saving him by his power and his strength, so too Jesus will grasp us by the hand to pull us up when our faith is weakened, when we seem to be overcome by life itself. Just as Jesus rescued Peter, Jesus has also promised to rescue his Church when it seems to be tossed and thrown about by the storms of the world. Jesus always has his hand on the rudder of that ship which is the Church. He will not abandon her. We must not abandon her. He will sustain her. We must sustain her too. The Church, which is all too often marred by human weakness and sin and led by imperfect and sinful men, never capsizes because it is always assisted by Jesus himself, always bringing us to the safety and security of the truth. It is Jesus who calms the waves and steadies the ship, not us. He only demands our faith. Faith is a necessity, not an optional thing, if we are to follow him.

Meditate on today’s Gospel when the going gets tough. Sit back and shut your eyes and imagine yourself in the scene. See him; see Jesus at a distance in the midst of whatever storm you are experiencing. See him motioning for you to come to him, to come to him across a stretch of water that you have never walked on before. When you feel like you are sinking, drowning, and you are afraid, feel his grip, the carpenter’s grasp, rough and strong hands saving you.

Yes, it takes a bit of daring to come to Jesus. In fact, takes courage and faith. Come to him nonetheless. Walk on the water. You will attract many along the way. God will be pleased.

***“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”***