

# Father John's Gospel Reflection



## Gospel

### GOSPEL – SUNDAY, 13 AUGUST, 2017

- Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Matt 14:22-33)

#### **Command me to come to you over the water.**

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. "It is a ghost" they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid." It was Peter who answered. "Lord", he said, "if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water." "Come" said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. "Lord! Save me!" he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. "Man of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## Reflection

### GOSPEL REFLECTION – SUNDAY, 13 AUGUST, 2017

- Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Matt 14:22-33)

Are the first hearers of this Gospel being challenged in the expectation that in following Jesus, there will be many trials and troubles?

Right at the start, Jesus compels his disciples to get into the boat, and take out to sea. Given the common perception of the sea as the locus of evil and chaos, Jesus is warning his disciples that they will encounter turmoil as his followers.

Jesus leaves them, and it is not insignificant that he retreats to the mountain, while he has set his disciples into the raging chaos of the sea. Given the mountain in Matthew's Gospel is a place of encountering God, here he prays, and is strengthened in his resolve to do his Father's will, while the disciples find themselves in a life-threatening situation. Previously (Matt 8:23-27) Jesus is with his disciples, even though asleep, and finally quells the sea. This time the disciples do not have the luxury of awaking Jesus, because Jesus is not there.

The story here in Matthew's gospel reveals who Jesus is, and what it means to be his disciple. Here Jesus reveals himself in the midst of chaos. If Jesus had not forced his disciples to embark on this uncertain journey, they would have missed the opportunity to see God revealed in their midst.

So, it is that sometimes we will be consoled by the presence of Jesus when we are experiencing trouble in our lives as followers of Jesus, but that other times, Jesus will seem to be far from us. Here the challenge in the tumult of life is to persist in our faith, to know that although Jesus might appear to be distant, ('you of little faith') he will not abandon us.

*Fr John Boyd-Boland ofm*

1. We are called to be disciples in the midst of a sometimes hostile environment and religiously indifferent culture.
2. Just as the disciples wanted to get rid of the crowds, so sometimes we would be happier if we could quietly spend time alone with the Lord.
3. There are times when we are consoled by the presence of Jesus, and other times we are challenged by his seeming absence.

## Take home Message