



We all have stormy times in life, times when we are afraid. Fear is an emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of impending personal disaster. When we are afraid, we become vulnerable to many temptations. Temptations to helplessness, sadness, or despair, which may call into question both the ultimate meaning of life and the nature of God who is sovereign over all his creation.

In this week's Gospel, Jesus teaches us that while we cannot avoid fear in our fallen world, we can by faith endure and overcome every disaster, every trial, every cross, that comes our way. We will be afraid, but we do not need to despair. Why do we not despair? We know God is always watching us, accompanying us. He will never allow anything we cannot handle. He will cause all to work for our good if only we surrender ourselves to him – trust him, love him, and have recourse to him. Ultimately, every trial we face can be turned to gold.

In the Gospel, Peter, and the other Apostles, are caught in a fierce life-threatening storm in the middle of the night while traveling by boat across the sea of Galilee – they were very much afraid. Jesus approaches the boat, walking on the water, and when the Apostles see Jesus, they are terrified – thinking they are seeing a ghost! Jesus

then reveals his identity and bids Peter to walk on the water toward him as a proof that he is Jesus. In the process of this incident, Peter becomes afraid of three things:

1) He is afraid of Jesus.

When Jesus approached Peter on the water, Peter did not recognize him, he thought he was seeing a ghost – an evil being who could hurt him. It is true for all of us, sometimes it is hard to see and recognize Jesus amidst our trials. Instead of looking to our omnipotent, compassionate, loving Savior for solace and persevere in faith, hope, and love, we are tempted to blame God of being negligent, unconcerned, absent, unloving. The truth is, if by faith we put our trust in God, He can not only strengthen us to persevere, He can actually bring good out of every trial we experience in life.

2) He is afraid of the wind

Naturally, Peter is afraid of the wind. Afterall, it is much more powerful than he, and deadly. Sometimes we can be afraid to commit ourselves to God's demands because they seem to be too much to bear. Pope St. John Paul II writes: "many fear that if they return to the faith their lives will become frustrated by demands perceived as more burdensome than liberating The Gospel is certainly demanding.... If man accepts these demands with an attitude of faith, he will also find in the grace that God never fails to give him, the necessary strength to meet those demands" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 222).

3) He is afraid of the water

Finally, Peter is afraid when he begins sinking into the water -- that which he feared, was coming upon him! In despair, he cries out, "Lord save me!" Jesus immediately stretched out his hand, lifted Peter up out of the water. They got into the boat together and the wind died down and all in the boat "did him homage" "Truly you are the Son of God!"

The Gospel today encourages all of us who have perhaps been looking at the winds and storms -- the demands of the Gospel -- and have lost sight of the loving Savior who will enable us to meet these demands. All of us who have perhaps begun to sink into the waters of temptation, fear, sin, Jesus is holding his hand out to us, if we will call out to him, surrender, trust in him, he will pick us up, strengthen us, and fill us with faith, hope, love and eternal life!

Your Servant in Christ,
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