

The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A - He Calls Us to Walk with Him on the Water in the Storms of Lives.

August 9, 2020.

When we lived in Hong Kong, summer is usually the typhoon season. Now we live in the north, we have heat waves (temperature above 30) and severe thunderstorm watch. Down south, the recent Hurricane Isaias has caused significant destruction in the Caribbean. It continued travelled up north along Florida, the North Carolina coast piled up boats, caused floods and fires that displaced dozens of people. At Gloucester, Massachusetts The Fisherman's Memorial built in 1925 are the names of more than 3,000 residents who were lost at sea between 1623 - 1923. Almost 30 years ago, a "storm with no name", left a trail of destruction from Nova Scotia to Florida, killing 13 people and causing close to \$500 million in damage. The storm gained national attention in 1997 when a book called "The Perfect Storm" was published and later made into a Hollywood film. Six fishermen from the city were perished in their boat Andrea Gail, a 12-year-old, 70-foot vessel. Storms are scary especially for the maritimers. Maybe that's why Pope Francis Universal prayer intention for August is: **We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.**

But God conquered the seas. And Jesus walked on the water. He continues to walk on water. He walks in the storms of our lives. That is one of the messages of this Sunday's Gospel reading (Matthew 14:22-33). **No matter what storms there is in the world and in our lives, Jesus walks in them. He conquers them.** Jesus conquers the storms that is caused by things that are beyond our control. Life itself is stormy: sudden death of a loved one, loss of jobs, flooding, wildfire evacuation, coronavirus pandemic, All of us have experienced these. We did not cause the storms, but we do suffer from them.

Henri Nouwen, the great Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian, wrote a little story describing this truth beautifully. Once upon a time there was a little river that said, "I can become a big river." It worked hard to get big, but in the process, encountered a huge rock. "I won't let this rock stop me," the river said. And the little river pushed and pushed until it finally made its way around the rock. Next the river encountered a mountain. "I won't let this mountain stop me," the river said. And the little river pushed and pushed until it finally carved a canyon through the mountain. The river, now large and powerful, finally arrived at the edge of a vast desert. "I won't let this desert stop me," the river said. But as the river pushed and pushed its way across the desert, the hot sand began soaking up its water until only a few puddles remained. The river was quiet, it's literally gone! Then the river heard a voice from above. **"My child, stop pushing. It's time to surrender. Let me lift you up. Let me take over."** The river said, "Here I am." The sun then lifted the river up and turned it into a huge cloud. And the wind carried the river across the desert and let it rain down on the hills and valleys of the faraway fields, making them fruitful and rich. **If we stay focused on Christ, having more faith in him than in ourselves, obeying his will even when it's hard, no obstacle or storm will be too much for us, and he will make our lives more fruitful than we could ever imagine.**

Jesus conquers the storms, even storms which we ourselves cause in our lives. Many of us have made bad choices and sinned. We suffer the results of our sins or the sins of others. A Chinese TV drama we just finished watching talks about a person who recognizes he has gotten into a relationship which is destroying his family and destroying himself. In the end, he returns to his family, but the damage has been done. He and his family suffer the results of his sins. Whether we caused the storms or suffer from the storms caused by others, **Jesus**

calls us to walk out onto the storms and walk towards him: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." That is what Jesus does for us all. **He walks on the storms of our lives, and then calls us to come and join him. He gives us the strength to walk on water** just like what he tells Peter, '**Then Peter said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."**' **"Come Peter." Peter walked on the water.'** What if we fail? What if we blink, and sink because we take our focus off Jesus, lose our faith and get frightened just like Peter? **"Don't be afraid," the Lord says.** He is there to reach down and lift us out of the water, out of the chaos, just as he lifted Peter out of the water, out of the storms of his life. He takes us as we are and walks with us on the water. He only asks us to have the courage to put our faith in Him, to trust in Him. Back to the TV drama, it has a happy ending because of forgiveness, faith and love.

Jesus gives us the strength to join Him in conquering the storms. Where is the storms in our lives? Is it sickness or death? Is it chemical dependence? Is it some other addictions? Is it turmoil in our marriage or our family? **Wherever, whenever, whatever that storms is, remember that there is nothing, no storm that is too great for Jesus to conquer. Like St Peter in the Gospel reading, we all need to learn that there is a limit to what we can do by means of our natural abilities. But, there is no limit to what God can do in us and through us if we truly trust him and abandon ourselves to his will.**