

# Reflecting on the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time



## **Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks* in this story.**



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

## **Let us begin our time of prayer for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time:**

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

**Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.**



Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.  
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
God alone fills us.



## **Spend some time just looking at the three images.**

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



## **Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.**



*Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.*

I will hear what the Lord God has to say,  
a voice that speaks of peace, peace for his people.  
His help is near for those who fear him  
and his glory will dwell in our land.

*Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.*

Mercy and faithfulness have met;  
justice and peace have embraced.  
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth  
and justice look down from heaven.

*Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.*

The Lord will make us prosper  
and our earth shall yield its fruit.  
Justice shall march before him  
and peace shall follow his steps.

*Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.*

**Now, either read slowly to yourself this story  
from the Gospel according to Matthew or better  
still, read it aloud, again slowly.**

## *From the Gospel according to Matthew 14:22-31*



Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'

The Gospel of the Lord.



**Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.**

**The reflection on the Gospel is provided by Eamonn Murphy, a parishioner in St Bartholomew's Parish, Rainhill.**



If asked to describe a picture of our world today most of us would mention our fears for our children, violence, the environment, the political situation, and indeed fears about our health, if our next pay cheque will suffice or the seeming pointlessness of daily life. At the same time many of us enjoy a standard of living that the wealthy of previous ages could not even dream of: access to transport, shops, exotic holidays, life expectancy and of course being able to view the world in our homes on a screen. Opportunities unheard of... We have so much to be grateful for!

Yet, a storm is raging. We are desperate, often alone and far away - feeling we are in darkness with a strong wind against us. We are being battered by the high seas, threatened from without by a hostile world and from within by fear and little faith. It is as if Matthew is describing our situation in 2020.

And then Jesus comes walking towards the disciples. They do not recognize him because of their fear. They think he is a ghost. Likewise, fear keeps us from recognizing, loving, and following Jesus as he walks with us and saves us in times of crisis. 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Jesus wants to give them - to give us - his strength, his absolute trust in the Father.

Our Church and parish communities are also fearful and are struggling to overcome fear: fear of losing followers, losing prestige, fear of rejection by society. Like ourselves our leaders fear taking risks. And yet playing in the background are Jesus' words 'Take heart, it is I; do not afraid.'

It is as if we don't know if Christ is a ghost or a real living person, raised up by the Father for our salvation. It is as if we feel that we don't have all the arguments to prove what we say we believe. We are committed but we doubt.

Peter, responding to Jesus' invitation to 'Come,' walks until he forgets Jesus' words and becomes frightened. Paralysed by fear he feels himself sinking into the depths. Just in time Peter cries out, 'Lord save me!'

In that moment of letting go, in that moment of acceptance, Peter's eyes were opened as ours can be too. In that moment of crying out, we can see Christ as a hand, held out to sustain our faith, to save us while saying at the same time: 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'

*Why do we doubt?* The reality is that sometimes our convictions fade away. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the uncertainties of life. Sometimes life is just like that. Jesus understood this as he invited Peter to 'Come.' Life is like walking on water. It's not firm ground, certainties are absent. It's a scary business.

It is then when we are at our weakest, our most selfish selves, our sinful selves when there is nothing left to do but to cry out 'Lord save me.' It is then we notice that our doubts and insecurities will not defeat us. Our

search for God is a journey through risk, insecurity, overcoming doubt and accepting that God is with us; 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Our questions and doubts remain and won't be resolved. Yet, we can cry out 'Lord save me', trusting that faith means walking on water, always expecting a hand to save us when we begin to sink.

I think of the Liverpool anthem; 'Walk on, walk on, with hope in your hearts and you'll never walk alone.' That tangible hope we believe is Jesus' presence with and within us 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

**Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem by the late Patrick Purnell SJ.**

*The Sea Flows Across*



The sea flows  
The shore of my innermost being,  
Then ebbs and flows and ebbs yet again;  
Flowing and ebbing, up and down,  
Gracing the wide empty beach with its water;  
Now smoothly, now beaten by the wind,  
Churning up the grit and the gravel,  
Mixed in the sun-browned grains of sand.  
Sometimes (it happens rarely) it seems  
As if the ebbing and the flowing halt, cease!  
And a vast stillness takes hold  
Of the sea and the air,  
Almost as if someone was holding their breath,  
Motionless!  
No bird rustles the breeze  
And not a sound—silence!  
And in that moment, that fleeting inch of time,  
In a peace which has no translation,  
Your sigh betrays your presence,  
As the flowing and the ebbing of the uncertain sea  
Sweeps,  
Once more, across the shore.

**As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.**

*Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:*



God Our Father,  
each person is precious to You.  
You are the Giver of life.  
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,  
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.  
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.  
Watch over those who are suffering,  
give strength to those who are aiding the sick  
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.  
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.  
Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

We pray for Pope Francis and all who serve our communities in leadership ... in the many storms which threaten our world at this time may they stay strong in the knowledge of God's faithful presence, whatever the prevailing conditions.

We pray for those fleeing war-torn countries seeking places of sanctuary in Europe, and especially those risking hazardous sea-crossings ... may they be welcomed and offered practical means of discerning the best next steps for themselves and their families.

We pray for the old, the frail and the vulnerable members of these same countries who have no choice but to remain in the midst of the devastation caused by war.

We pray for young people whose final school days have been affected by the coronavirus and who now look to find employment in a challenging economic climate ... that they will find practical and effective support from within their community.

We pray for all those who are close to death and those who have recently died ... may they know the eternal love of God.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

**To end your time of reflection, listen to *Be not afraid.***



You shall cross the barren desert but you shall not die of thirst.  
You shall wander far in safety though you do not know the way.  
You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.  
You shall see the face of God and live.

*Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow Me and I will give you rest.*

If you pass through raging waters in the sea, you shall not drown.

If you walk amidst the burning flames you shall not be harmed.

If you stand before the pow'r of hell and death is at your side,  
know that I am with you, through it all.

*Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow Me and I will give you rest.*

Blessed are the poor for the Kingdom shall be theirs.  
Blest are you that weep and mourn for one day you shall laugh.

And if wicked tongues insult and hate you all because of Me,  
blessed, blessed are you!

*Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow Me and I will give you rest.*

When the earth has turned beneath you and your voice is seldom heard.

When the flood of gifts that blessed your life has long since ebbed away.

When your mind is thick and hope is thin and dark is all around,  
I will stand beside you till the dawn.

*Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow Me and I will give you rest.*

## Acknowledgements

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