

Read

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Psalm 85:9, 10, 11-12,
13-14

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 13, 2023



REFLECTION

In today's Gospel, Jesus is off by himself praying while the disciples are at sea, facing rough waters that are tossing their boat around. Notice that Jesus begins to walk toward them even before they can seek him for help. Because they are not expecting Jesus to be walking toward them on the water, they are more afraid of him than they are of the waves and the wind! When Jesus reveals himself to them Peter wants proof. So Jesus invites Peter to come and walk with him amidst the dangerous waves. Peter begins to walk toward Jesus but then becomes afraid of the wind and waves and begins to sink. There is so much fear here: fear of the stranger, fear of the unknown, and fear of that which we cannot control.

In the midst of all of this, Jesus reaches out and catches him. Jesus came to the disciples in the midst of the storm and in the midst of their fear. Having faith in God's love and support can help us stay afloat, especially when we are most afraid or anxious. Peter's simple cry of "Save me!" can become our own. When our faith falls short, we begin to lose hope and feel like we are sinking. Therefore, we must trust in God's love and support even when it seems impossible to do so.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How has Jesus supported you during a time of despair or anxiety?
- ❖ Who is someone in your life that could use your support right now?



ACTION

We all have moments in life that feel hopeless, from intimidating exams to the death of a loved one. The next time you feel an overwhelming wave of anxiety try this: imagine that you are Peter walking on the rough sea in the middle of the night. Imagine Jesus is reaching his hand out to hold you up. Perhaps you too can act as Jesus' hand and reach out to a friend or loved one when they are in the darkness of fear.



During our darkest hours, God carries us. Check out the poem "Footprints in the Sand."



August 13, 2023

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #115A

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Psalm 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

After witnessing the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, the disciples encounter Jesus in today's Gospel passage in a terrifying way: walking on water toward them in a storm! Peter doubts Christ's presence, but Jesus assures him of his presence. Our reflection for today focuses on the doubts we all face along our journey of faith. We are reminded, just as Jesus reminds the disciples in the boat, that Jesus is here, present with us. We might not always recognize the way he comes to us, but by looking at the blessings of our lives, we can see where he has worked through others to show us God's love.

Q FOCUS: *At the exact moment we cry out to God, he is there with us.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We celebrate the life, faith, and courage of St. Maximilian Kolbe on August 14. He was born in Poland in 1894 and died on August 14, 1941. He was a Polish priest and a Franciscan friar who was also a prisoner of the Nazis in World War II. He was held prisoner in the concentration camp at Auschwitz, where he volunteered to die in the place of a stranger, a man who was a husband and a father. He was starved for two weeks and then killed. Pope John Paul II canonized him on October 10, 1982. He is the patron saint of those that struggle with addictions, and of prisoners, journalists, and families. Throughout his time in prison, he was a man of calm faith and

encouragement for those around him. When time for his death came, he accepted his time with grace and trust in God.

Church Teaching Connection

"The faithful and ready response to the Lord's call always enables one to achieve extraordinary things. But Jesus himself told us that we are capable of performing miracles with our faith, faith in Him, faith in his word, faith in his voice. Peter however begins to sink the moment he looks away from Jesus and he allows himself to be overwhelmed by the hardships around him. But the Lord is always there, and when Peter calls him, Jesus saves him from danger" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, August 10, 2014).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 14:22-33

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward

them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

It must have been pretty unbelievable to have seen another human being walk on water. Let's take a few steps back and set the scene. The disciples have been with Jesus for a while. In fact, Jesus had just finished feeding a crowd of over five thousand with just five loaves of bread and two fish! After he left the crowds, he also asked the disciples to get into the boat and start across the sea. Needing some time for himself, he went up the mountain to pray. After the weather started getting stormy, though, he made his way to where the disciples were by walking on the water to them.

► **Have you ever seen anything that just astounded you? Have you seen magic tricks that you just can't figure out?**

The Gospel tells us about the reaction the disciples have to seeing Jesus. They think he's a ghost. They are terrified! We can only imagine the panic that must have overcome them at seeing such a sight.

But Jesus knew they were afraid and tried to comfort them. He called out to them so they would know it was him. But they still weren't convinced and Peter tests Jesus. We all test God at various times in our life because we are scared or we don't trust that God will take care of us. Have you ever thought, "Jesus, if you love me, will you do this for me? Will you solve this problem? If you are so powerful, prove your love for this person or your grace for that situation."

► **What are some situations that people might experience that would cause them to question God or doubt him?**

We have all been there. And then when we don't get the answer we want, we might continue to doubt Jesus. We doubt his presence, his care, his love, and his faithfulness. When Jesus told Peter to get on the water and walk to him, Peter had great faith. But once Peter starts to doubt again, he sinks. His own faith has faltered.

How have you doubted God in the past? Do you doubt him now? What area of your life doesn't seem to have God's presence? A difficult relationship? Your parent's marriage? Your activities? Your team? Your future? The meaning of this Gospel passage for us is that no matter our feelings, God is constantly with us. He is with you when you achieve goals, when you celebrate wins, and when you feel like you are on top of the world. He is also with you when you struggle, when you go through heartache, and when you feel like you are alone. Jesus is your constant, just as he was with Peter before and after he walked on water.

Isn't it amazing to know that Jesus' presence is stronger than our emotions? When we open our hearts to him, he is there, immediately. There is no wait because he is always there. Ask Jesus to help remind you of his presence in all areas of your life. Tell him what you are struggling with in your heart. He wants to hear from you.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 6.

There will be times that we will doubt our faith.

We can always turn to God and cry, "Save me!"

God is with us immediately and in every moment.

Act on the Word

Because of Jesus

For this activity, you will need a candle and matches (or an electric candle), index cards, pens, and access to a recording of the song "Lord, I Need You" by Matt Maher.

Ask the group to sit in a circle or in a way they can all see the candle. As you light the candle, open with the following brief prayer: "Heavenly Father, show us your presence over the next few minutes. Let your Holy Spirit guide our hearts and minds to remember the ways you have been with us throughout our lives."

To begin this activity, give each young person an index card and a pen. Ask them to write down the blessings in their lives. Encourage them to fill the index cards as much as they can and encourage them to be detailed in their descriptions of the blessings. If they need help thinking of these things, you can share with them examples of blessings, like their families, food in the refrigerator, their friends, the home they live in, their involvement at school, their pet, and so on. Give them a few minutes to think of their blessings and write them down.

Once they are finished, have them read over their cards as they listen to "Lord, I Need You" by Matt Maher. When the song is over, invite them to think of the Gospel again and to listen as you reflect

on blessings, using the following script: "The blessing of friendship between the disciples was because of Jesus. The blessing of faith, because of Jesus. The blessing of ministering to others, because of Jesus. The blessing of seeing a miracle, because of Jesus. The blessings you wrote on your index cards, all because of Jesus. When we look at the blessings we have, we can easily see where Jesus is in our lives. When we have doubts, we should acknowledge those doubts and then lean on Jesus. I encourage you to keep these index cards in a place where you will see them every day. This is a reminder that when we doubt, when challenges arise, God is present. No matter what."

As you play "Lord, I Need You" one more time, ask the teens to use this as a prayer to God, asking him to be present to them when they doubt.

Closing Prayer

*Faithful God,
remind us of your great love for us,
and instill in us an unwavering trust in
your plan for our salvation.*

*Restore our courage
and deepen our faith
that we might always long for the
embrace of your unconditional love.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.