

19th Sunday of the Year A

Courage, it is I! Do not be afraid. (Mt 14:27)



First Reading

1 Kings 19:9.11-13

Elijah went into the cave and spent the night in it. Then he was told, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord." Then the Lord himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Second Reading

Romans 9:1-5

What I want to say is no pretence; I say it in union with Christ – it is the truth – my conscience in union with the Holy Spirit assures me of it too. What I want to say is this: my sorrow is so great, my mental anguish so endless, I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ if it could help my brothers and sisters of Israel, my own flesh and blood. They were adopted as children, they were given the glory and the covenants; the Law and the ritual were drawn up for them, and the promises were made to them. They are descended from the patriarchs and from their flesh and blood came Christ who is above all, God for ever blessed! Amen.

Gospel

Matthew 14:22-33

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 headwind. 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."

Meditation

When a strong wind halts the passage of their boat, the disciples believe they see a ghost approaching them. They do not think it is Jesus whom they left in prayer on the mountain. But he is following them, moving like a shadow across the water in order to save them from the danger they face. Through the turbulence of the waves his voice reaches them. Peter, at first hesitant to recognize him, finally throws himself into the water at the call of his Master. Suddenly he is caught in the squall and is about to go under. Jesus reproaches him: "How little faith you have, why did you falter?" At the voice of him who sustains his enthusiasm, Peter comes up from the baptism of fear and death into which he had sunk. The waves subside, the wind abates, and those in the boat give their hearts over to faith.

On the hostile sea of this world, the ship of the Church breaks through the waves, rising above the assaults of evil. The master is not visibly present. His return is awaited at the end of the night. The Church must steer its course toward the harbour of salvation by the light of the powerful word of the risen Lord.

Soon after the resurrection, the faith of the disciples foundered. They experienced doubt and fear in the face of him whom they perceived as a spirit. In the person of a weak but enthusiastic Peter, the faith of the disciples finds its expression. This is our faith. If we turn resolutely toward Christ in obedience to his call, our faith can never be overcome by fear and doubt.

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