

Scripture Reading - A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew (*Matthew 14:25-33*)

Jesus walks on the water

During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's You," Peter replied, "tell me to come to You on the water." "Come," He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – the conditions for miracles

I am here. Don't be afraid. It is observed that the phrase 'do not be afraid' and variations of it occur 365 times in the Bible, seemingly one reassurance from God for each day. The Lord is reminding us of the need to do away with our unholy fears because He is always present in us and around us, and cares for us even to the extent of knowing the number of hairs on our heads. In the presence of God, there is no room for fear, just as in the presence of light, darkness and shadow disappear. We are called to live in the presence of God daily at every moment, and in so doing, conquer the unholy fears in our hearts.

When unshakeable faith and trust rule the situation, the conditions for miracles are present. When Peter realised that it was Jesus and not a ghost, the knowledge of the comforting presence of Jesus strengthened his faith to the extent that he asked Jesus to command him to walk on water! Peter was rewarded for his faith in Jesus Christ when he was enabled to walk on water. When Peter's faith and trust in God ruled his heart and mind, Christ put him on a supernatural plane on which God's power took over the laws of nature. In such a situation where deep rooted trust and faith rule the situation, the conditions for miracles to happen are created. God's glory is manifested in the miracles that are made possible by living and proven faith and trust. Am I able to trust God enough in all my trials and difficulties to the level where He can bring my situations to a supernatural plane on which He can fully manifest His divine power? Do I have the required trust and faith to say to the Lord like Peter, "Tell me to come to you on the water?" If no, what are the obstacles to my trust in the Lord? Why I do doubt God's power and love?

Unholy fear and discouragement destroy our trust in God. Peter started out confident but faltered when he saw how strong the wind was against him. The initial faith and trust were overcome by fear of the difficulties and danger of the situation. Unholy fear reigned supreme and trust and faith were snuffed out. Natural laws replace God's supernatural power, and Peter was once more operating on a natural plane with his fears and his own abilities. Peter immediately started to sink. How often do we react like St. Peter in the face of formidable trials and difficulties in life! We felt the wind blowing hard against us, the waves engulfing us and our boats threatening to overturn. Unholy fear and discouragement set in and rule the situation. The comforting and reassuring presence of God is quickly forgotten. Anxiety grew, discouragement took hold of us and we begin to ask if God really cares about us! As if God changes because our feelings and situations change!

What is needed is unshakeable trust in God. If Peter had closed his eyes, he would probably had been able to complete his walk to Jesus, the harbour of calm waters. If Peter had focussed on the near presence of the Lord rather than on the difficulties of the situation, his trust and faith would have remained strong. It is precisely that God would like us to demonstrate our faith and trust in Him in such challenging situations that He sends such 'storms' into our lives. Without the 'storms' there is no need to prove our faith and trust. We can decide to trust God irrespective of the outcome of our situation like the three heroic young men in Holy Scripture: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo who were thrown into a burning furnace for being faithful to God but emerged with not even a single hair singed. God is faithful and never abandons those who place all their trust in Him. It is up to us to decide to trust Him. Every trial tests our trust in God. Our trust in God glories Him immensely.

Conversation with Our Lord

Precious Lord, You would like me to show my love for You by demonstrating my trust even during the difficult situations that You send into my life. Your Presence is in me and around me. I have no reason to fear irrespective of whatever situation I am in, as You care for me even to the smallest detail of my life. I wish to live every moment of my life in Your Presence and to banish all unholy fears from my heart. In every trial that You send me, help me to focus on Your near Presence, Your love and Providence. Please bless my resolution. O Mary, conceived without sin, increase my trust in Your Son. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.

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