

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

One of the first lessons we learn when driving a car is: “Keep your eyes on the road.” If we keep looking at the steering wheel, the dashboard, or something happening on the side of the road, we can easily lose control and have an accident.

The same is true in our spiritual life: we must keep our eyes fixed on the Lord.

In today’s Gospel, the disciples are caught in a violent storm. The wind is strong, the waves are high, and they are filled with fear. Then, in the darkness, Jesus comes walking on the water and says, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Peter responds with faith: “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

Jesus simply says, “Come.”

Peter steps out of the boat and begins to walk on the water. Imagine that! As long as Peter keeps his eyes on Jesus, he is able to do what seems impossible.

But then something happens. Peter notices the strong wind and the waves. His attention shifts from Jesus to the storm. Fear takes over, and he begins to sink.

There is a beautiful story about a young boy who was learning to be a sailor. One day, during a storm, he was told to climb to the top of the ship’s mast. At first, he climbed easily because he kept looking upward. But halfway up, he made the mistake of looking down at the stormy sea. He became dizzy and frightened.

An old sailor saw him and shouted, “Look up, boy! Look up!”

The boy followed his advice, fixed his eyes upward, and safely completed the climb.

Peter had a similar experience. As long as he looked at Jesus, he was able to keep going. When he looked at the storm, fear took over.

How often that happens to us.

Sometimes life becomes very difficult: a problem with one of our children, a troubled marriage, a difficult financial situation, loneliness, sickness, or the sudden death of someone we love. These things can come into our lives without warning.

And when a storm comes into our life, it can easily take our focus away from God. We become so worried about the problem that we forget the One who is with us in the middle of the storm. The more we focus on the storm, the greater our fear becomes.

But notice what Peter does when he begins to sink. He does not give up. He cries out, “Lord, save me!”

That is a beautiful prayer. Sometimes we don’t need many words. When life becomes overwhelming, we can simply say, “Lord, save me. Lord, help me. Lord, I trust in you.”

And immediately, Jesus reaches out his hand and catches Peter.

The storm does not disappear immediately. But Peter discovers something more important: Jesus is with him in the storm.

The first reading gives us another beautiful lesson. Elijah is frightened and exhausted. He is running away from Ahab and Jezebel, who want him dead. He is looking for God, and he

experiences a strong wind, an earthquake, and a fire. But the Lord is not in these dramatic signs.

Finally, Elijah hears a tiny whispering sound, and he recognizes the presence of God.

Sometimes we also look for God only in dramatic moments. But God often speaks in quietness. Our lives are filled with noise—phones, television, news, conversations, worries, and distractions. We need moments of silence and prayer so that we can hear the gentle voice of God.

That is one reason we come to Mass. We come here to stop for a moment, listen to God's Word, receive Christ in the Eucharist, and remind ourselves that we are not alone.

When we leave this church, the storms of life may still be there. But hopefully, we leave with our eyes fixed again on Jesus.

So whatever storm you may be facing, remember the lesson of that little boy: Look up.

Remember Peter's lesson: Keep your eyes on Jesus.

And remember Elijah's lesson: Make room for silence so that you can hear God's voice.

And when fear begins to overwhelm you, pray the simple prayer of Peter:

"Lord, save me."

Amen.