

19th Sunday (A)

13th August 2017

'A voice that speaks of peace'

1K 19: *the sound of a gentle breeze ...* Ps 84: *a voice that speaks of peace*

Rom 9: ...

Mt 14: 22–33: Peter walks on the water with Christ

What is the most surprising thing about this account of Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee? Is it that Jesus walks on the water? Well, although this is a great surprise for the disciples, out that night on the lake, to walk on the water is actually no great feat for the Son of God. “Through Him all things were made,” we say each Sunday in the Creed. God Almighty, through His Word, the Son, made all things to be. Is it any wonder that He who created all things can defy the elements? He who is “Lord of sea and sky,” He can walk on the water, still the waves, calm the wind.

It’s rather more surprising that *Peter* walks on the water. Almighty God can do all things, but He also wants us by faith in Him to do extraordinary things. Think of the martyrs who have gone to their death so as not to deny Jesus; the great works of charity which can be achieved by a person inspired by faith and love (think of the founders of

religious orders etc.*); ...

[* I heard of the death at 87 yrs a couple of days ago of a religious sister Sr Ruth Pfau, known as the ‘Mother Teresa of Pakistan,’ who as a missionary sister, and doctor, has devoted her life to eliminating leprosy in Pakistan. Truly this sort of life, is God calling an individual to ‘walk on water’?]

... Think too of the day-to-day life of the Christian, trying to live a holy and moral life against the pressures of society at large. When we do what God calls us to — just as Jesus called to Peter — we can ‘walk on water,’ doing things unexpectedly great.

But perhaps the most surprising thing is not that Jesus can walk on water, nor that He can command Peter to walk on the water, but that when Peter fails, Jesus’s hand is there. Jesus, the Son of God, wants to stretch out His hand to save this individual man, Peter, even in the moment of His disbelief. The amazing thing, then, is not that God can do great things, but that the all-powerful God will do the smallest things. Perhaps man is reluctant to believe that

Almighty God will stoop to this. We are reluctant to believe we are loved like this. Much of mankind is happier to disbelieve in God at all, than to accept that the fundamental power in the universe is so loving to each individual person.

Because once we believe that God does love us like this, personally, in the small, everyday ways ... putting out His hand to catch us when we fall, raising us up in our doubts and in our failings ... then we have to change, we have to respond, we have to make sacrifices to return this love. We have then to turn to Him, in all His gentleness and say, as the apostles in the boat did: *Truly You are the Son of God!*

For it is not the power of God which is impressive, but His personal touch, and His peace. Elijah knew the same in the cave on the mountain: God did not speak to Him in the gale, or the fire, or the earthquake, but in the gentle breeze. That God comes to us with a gentle touch — this is what makes us listen. *I will hear what the Lord God has to say — a voice that speaks of peace.*