Tuesday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 14:22-36): Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side of the sea, 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 him, 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.”

After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. When the men of that place recognized him, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought to him all those who were sick and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak, and as many as touched it were healed.

“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

Fr. Lluc TORCAL Monk of Santa Maria de Poblet
(Santa Maria de Poblet, Tarragona, Spain)

Today, we will not see Jesus sleeping on the boat while it sinks, nor rebuking the winds and the waves with a single word, thus causing the amazement of the disciples (cf. Mt 8:23-27). But today's action is also disconcerting, whether for his first disciples or for us as we contemplate it today.

Jesus had obliged his disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side; he had sent everyone away after having satiated the hungry crowd and had remained alone on the mountain, deeply

immersed in prayer. (cf. Mt 14:22-23). Without their Master, the disciples were having trouble facing the wind. It was then when Jesus came to them walking on the water.

The disciples were understandably terrified to see Jesus: since people do not usually walk over water, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But they were wrong: it was not an illusion, but the Lord himself, inviting them —as He did quite often— not to be afraid, but to trust him to awaken their faith.

This faith was first demanded of Peter, who said: “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water” (Mt 14:28). With these words, Peter showed that faith consists of abiding by the word of Christ: Peter did not say “let me walk on the water”; rather, he wanted to follow what the Lord commanded him to do, and to believe the veracity of the Master's words.

While Peter’s doubts made him reel his emerging faith, they led the other disciples to bow down and confess before their Master: “Truly, you are the Son of God” (Mt 14:33). “The apostles, being storm-tossed in the sea, as soon as they saw the waters leaping up round their Lord's feet, and beheld His fearless footsteps on the water, as He walked amid the raging waves of the sea, and the ship, which was beaten upon by the waves, had rest as soon as Christ entered it, and they saw the waves and the winds obeying Him — then, though as yet they did not believe in their hearts they believed Him to be God's true Son” (St. Ambrose).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Prayer is conversation and dialogue with God: security of things that are expected, equal status and honor with the angels, amendment of sins, remedy of evils, guarantee of future goods” (St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- “What is prayer? It is commonly held to be a conversation. In a conversation there is always an “I” and a “you”. In this case the You is with a capital Y. The “You” is more important because our prayer begins with God” (Saint John Paul II)

- “There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray "in the name" of Jesus…” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2.664)