Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 14:22-33): After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, 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 Peter, 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."

"Beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
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Today, Peter's experience reflects situations that, more often than not, we also eventually undergo. Who has never, ever felt, at least once, that the world was crumbling around and then decided to let it all go and surrender to despair? Under these circumstances we must revive our faith and exclaim along with the psalmist: “Show us, LORD, your mercy; grant us your salvation” (Ps 85:7).

For the ancient mentality, the sea was where the evil forces dwelt, the kingdom of death, threatening for all people. By “walking on the sea” (cf. Mt 14:25), Jesus is telling us that through his death and resurrection He defeats the powers of evil and death that threaten and seek to destroy us. Is not our existence like a fragile boat, tossed around by the stormy waves of the sea of life with the hope of reaching some meaningful shoreline?

Peter believed he had a clear faith and a rather consistent strength, but “he began to sink” (cf. Mt 14:30); Peter had assured Jesus he was willing to follow him till death, but his own weakness frightened him and,

in a fit of passion, he denied his Master thrice. Why does Peter sink just when he starts walking on the water? Because, instead of looking at Jesus' face, he looks at the sea and, as of that moment, he loses his strength, his confidence in the Lord and he just breaks down. But "Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter" (Mt 14:31) and He saved him.

After His resurrection, the Lord does not let his apostle sink in remorse and despair; rather, with His generous forgiveness, He restores his confidence. In the battle of life, whom do I look at the most? When I feel the weight of my sins and mistakes dragging me down, sinking me, do I allow the good Lord to stretch out His hand and save me?

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Prayer also makes time pass very quickly and with such great delight that one does not notice its length" (St. John Mary Vianney)

- "The Lord is "up on a mountainside" of the Father: We can always invoke Him" (Benedict XVI)

- "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb 1:1-2). Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one…" (Catechism of the Church Catholic, n. 65)