

Homily For Tuesday of the 18th Week of Ordinary Time- Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- August 7, 2018

Jeremiah 30:1-2,12-15,18-22 "Your guilt is great ... (yet) you shall be my people."

Psalms 102: "The Lord will build up Zion again, and appear in all his glory."

Matthew 14:22-36 "Why did you doubt, O man of little faith."

Intro

This is quite an exciting time in the lectionary readings. There are the August Sunday readings which take us deep into the mystery of Christ's body and blood in an absolutely unique and stunning way, which we need to hear if we are to understand what Jesus was doing for us at the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. Then, yesterday, we heard about the transfiguration- Jesus going up a mountain and being transfigured and communing with God along with the figures of Elijah and Moses. Today it is another trip up a mountain and walking on water.

Theme

Today, the gospel is full of action and movement: The disciples go from the place of the feeding of 5000, a deserted place by the shore, into the boats to the other side, at Jesus' command. Jesus dismisses the crowds there and goes up a mountain, then appears walking on the water towards the boat. Nature also is on the move, from that peaceful scene by the shore to utter death dealing chaos on the water.

There is so much richness in this passage: images and messages. We have to pick out just one or two for our journeys.

I suggest that there are two paths being presented for us. There are two movements or directions. In the gospel passage, there is the movement up the mountain, towards intimacy with God, and a downward movement, into a stormy chaos and death. Up ... and down.

Could there be a more beautiful - and terrifying - image of two different trajectories than Peter going down into the waves ... and Jesus taking his hand and lifting him from his doom.

Movement or Path # 1 Jesus

1. Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, in lengthy intimate communion with the Father.
2. Jesus goes down, walking on water, demonstrating his power over the forces of nature.
3. Jesus invites and reprimands Peter, the one who will be the rock of the church, asking Peter to trust him.
4. Jesus heals the sick, demonstrating his power over disease.

Movement or Path # 2 Peter and the Others

1. The disciples go down on to the water.
2. They are terrified of the forces of nature.
3. Because of his dependence on his own bravado, Peter loses sight of Jesus and sees only the danger of the world around him.
4. The disciples are in awe of the Son of God because of what they have witnessed.

Fulfilment in Jesus

It seems obvious which way we would want to go, but what we need reminding of is that God has given us Jesus Christ himself as The Way. Recognizing Jesus on our path, our journey, is the key to going in the right direction. What is the identity of Jesus is always at the centre of the decision. Note the gospel passage movement on Jesus' identity.

1. When they are terrified, it is a ghost
2. But Jesus says, "Do not be afraid. It is I", suggesting God's revelation to Moses ...

3. Peter isn't sure and questions our Lord: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."
4. In awe of what they have seen, the disciples identify Jesus: "Truly you are the son of God."

Point # 3 and Application You and Me

We always have a choice on what path we will follow. Also, we must always be aware of where we are going. We may ask these questions of ourselves:

1. Will we pray or not? Will we go up a mountain to commune with God in the midst of our business?
2. Are we afraid of the chaos around us or are we willing to love and be loved?
3. Are we receptive to the renewing of our minds or are we stuck in our own ideas?
4. Will we fall down before the Blessed Sacrament or worship ourselves? Who will we worship? What will we be willing to commit?

Pope Sixtus and four deacons with him, died in Rome during the persecution of Emperor Valerian in the 3rd century. They knew it was the path set out for them because they followed the one who laid down his life willingly.

Call To Action

The people of Israel in Jeremiah's time are hopelessly lost in their sins. What language God uses: A grievous wound, an incurable pain. Their guilt is so great, there is no medicine, no cure. They are, spiritually, lost in a storm of their own sin, with no hope of survival. And yet, God reaches down, offers his hand to a drowning nation and says, "I will restore your life... you shall be my people and I will be your God." That is ultimately our path, if we are willing to walk it- to allow God to be our God, so we can be his people.