

APRIL 17, 2021  
St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin (Protectress of Canada)  
John 6: 16-21

“IT IS I; DO NOT BE AFRAID!”

To serve the Lord gives joy to the hearts of every individual – both to the server, the person himself/herself and to those whom he/she serves. The first Christian communities were going stronger and bigger in membership, and everyone were joyful to share their faith and love for Jesus. These past days, we heard how the first Christians shared and willing to sell their own lands, give their possessions, and wealth for those in need. Our readings gave us that picture of enthusiastic community to be with one another and helping each other. But the growing community need to be guided, and the apostles were occupied in preaching and teaching the Word. So, the communities, in particular the Greek Christian community asked the help of the apostles to settle their present concern, that is, their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The apostles asked them to select among them seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom to serve the poor, the widows and those in need – the principal works of deacons. This is the birth of deacons, those who are assisting the Church in serving those in need! “It is also worth noting that it was the community who chose the seven men but that it was the apostles who ‘ordained’ them by prayer and a laying on of hands. These are the first recorded ‘ministers’ appointed in the Christian community and the pattern of their formal initiation will become the norm: the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them – as we see in Acts and the letters of Paul. This still is done in the conferring of ministries today. At this stage they are not actually called ‘deacons’ but the word diakonia (diakonia), meaning ‘service’ is used twice in the passage.”<sup>1</sup> So like the first deacons, we are all called to serve and be of service to our brothers and sisters in need.

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<sup>1</sup> [livingspace.sacredspace.ie](http://livingspace.sacredspace.ie)

In our gospel, St. John used a lot of symbolism describing the life of the apostles and can also apply in ourselves. St. John is describing the difficult life of the apostles without Jesus besides them: "It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them."<sup>2</sup> They were travelling across the sea of Capernaum when they encountered storm, and without Jesus with them, they were afraid and without Him is a kind of darkness and feeling alone. The rough sea, strong wind and the boat with the apostles symbolized Christian community in difficult times, scandals, persecutions, and challenges which still surround and happen today in our Catholic Church. Amidst this difficult situation, Jesus came towards them, they felt hope and relief, and glow in the dark storm. The comforting words: "It is I; do not be afraid,"<sup>3</sup> reduced their fear and anxiety. The word 'It is I' or 'I AM' is similar to the word expressed by God from the burning bush to Moses in Mount Sinai. This phrase recognizes Jesus as one with God. The words 'Do not be afraid' frequently used by Jesus is an assurance that with Him there is no need to be afraid because His presence and love cast out fear and worries. With Jesus, the shore seemed far away, all of a sudden, they found they reached their destination safely, the storm was over, their fears and anxiety disappeared, and felt peace with the presence of Jesus.

My sisters and brothers, we can experience the same way if we are with Jesus always. The storm of life will be nothing, challenges and difficulties will be over, only in the presence and love of Jesus. He will be with us so let us place our trust in Him and His mercy will be with us.

Let us ask the intercession of St. Kateri Tekawitha, the Protectress of Canada, who gave all her life to Jesus, took a vow of chastity, and pledged to marry only Jesus Christ. She was diligent, hardworking, devout Catholic and practiced self-mortification and denial for the love of Christ. May St. Kateri intercedes for us as we pledge our allegiance to Jesus whom we trust and believe will never abandon those who offered their lives for Him.

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<sup>2</sup> John 6: 17 NRSV Catholic Bible Press

<sup>3</sup> John 6: 20 NRSV Catholic Bible Press