

Homily (19th Sunday of Ordinary Time) – 8/13/2017

On August 21st, in about one week, a spectacular physical phenomenon will occur in the skies. Next Monday at about two o'clock in the afternoon there will be an eclipse of the sun. In some parts of the country, this eclipse will be total. Now, this physical phenomenon has not happened in 99 years. For almost two minutes the skies will become dark. Midday will look like midnight. No light will shine from above on the world. Yet, on a spiritual level, an eclipse of light from above has already occurred. At least that is the way it feels.

Our daily news chatters about political gridlock in Washington and special counsel investigations into the White House. Our television airwaves crackle with images of domestic terrorism in Charlottesville and possible nuclear war with North Korea. There is talk of a fire and fury the likes of which this world has never seen. And no light for guidance breaks through from above. This is why today's gospel can be so important. The apostles are in the dark. Their boat is in a storm. They represent you and me. The boat can represent our faith in God and hope for the world. It can symbolize our country and church. It can image our personal lives and at times all seem in danger of going under.

Yet, in the gospel in the midst of all the storms circulating around Peter and the apostles, stands the serene, self-possessed God-Man, Jesus. How can we experience his peace? Especially when there are dark storms in our souls? How can we be like Peter who at first trust Jesus and walks toward him on the water? And how not to be like Peter who takes his eyes off of Jesus and sinks into himself? Well for that we have to see things in new way. For that we have to bring out the Faith Eye chart. What is the Faith Eye Chart?

Once teaming up with a Presbyterian minister to do a funeral, he showed me this faith eye chart in his office. You know how the eye doctor test you on an eye chart. Maybe a large E on the first line. And then below each line has smaller and smaller letters until maybe the final line you have to squint to see. Something similar happens with the minister's faith eye chart. On the top line of this faith eye chart, in huge letters were the letters WE. In the next line in large letters were the letters LIVE. Next line in medium size letters were the letters BY then smaller letters, Faith. And still smaller and smaller letters, and not by sight. The last line you had to squint to see it.

We Live By Faith and Not By Sight is what the Faith eye chart said. Those are scripture words from Saint Paul. Very clever but I would only add and not by feelings. We live by faith and not by feelings. If we worship feelings, if feelings are our God. If our lifestyle centers around the pleasure-pain principal, which is if it feels good do it, if it doesn't don't do it, we cannot grow our faith in Christ.

We will never mature in faith if we depend only on our feelings. For it is almost unnatural to follow Jesus. By that I mean many times to mature in Christ we have to go against our natural inclinations. In the old days we called faith a supernatural virtue. However, on the other hand, if we think we are mature in faith, and are ready to be like Peter and get out of the boat and walk on the water toward Jesus, we have to leave behind one thing: First the wish to have had a better past life. That God would have arranged somehow that we had a better childhood, adolescence, marriage, family, home, & children.

So, many people hold back on trust in God due to life not going according to their plans. Due to life not working out the way they wished, not having the job they wanted, or the home they deserved.

Still next to love, trust in God is the most important of all the virtues. Without trust there is not much of a relationship with anyone including God. So why not give Jesus the benefit of the doubt. Believe that somehow his hand is leading you in life. Trust that he is so creative, he can make all our past, our wrong choices, even our sins be moments of grace and work for us. If we don't give up the wish to have had a better past life our eyes will look away from Jesus and like Peter we will believe life is all up to us, that is what atheists believe and for a moment Peter did too.

Christ was with Peter and the apostles even though their panicky feelings made them fail to realize it. Christ does not abandon his church or any one of us. But we need time and space, we need planned time and planned space for God's presence to let these truths sink into our spirit, otherwise like Peter we will sink into mistrust.

What are the chances that you will find some time and space this week, to meditate on this gospel scene. Place yourself in the boat with the apostles. You and Peter step out of the boat and walk on the water toward Jesus. Are you ready

to make this walk of faith into your future? Are you ready to get out of the boat and walk toward Jesus. Are you ready to keep your eyes only on him?