

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A  
1Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a  
Ps 85 *passim*  
Rom 9:1-5  
Mt 14:22-33

Deacon Bob Cassey  
St. Petronille Parish, Glen Ellyn  
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If only Peter had kept his eyes fixed on Jesus. . . .

In last Sunday's Gospel we saw a manifestation of Jesus's glory. Today we get a manifestation of Jesus's power. Last Sunday was the Feast of the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John – the core team of apostles – went up the mountain with Jesus, and there he was transfigured into a radiant figure robed in dazzling white, a figure in conversation with Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. Their mountaintop experience concluded with God the Father appearing in a bright cloud and saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."

Listen to him. If you want to know who God is, if you want to know what God hopes for from us, listen to Jesus, look to Jesus.

Today's Gospel shows us Jesus walking on water. In biblical times, the sea was feared as the realm of chaos. This was way before underwater cameras, remember, before submarines and scuba diving. There were boats and ships that sailed on the surface of the water, but the seas could become choppy and stormy, boats could capsize and get swamped, and shipwrecks were almost commonplace. And that was all on the surface. The world *under* the sea was largely unknown territory. And for that reason it was scary.

In today's Gospel, Jesus goes off alone, to pray. He sends the apostles off in a boat, to cross the Sea of Galilee. The wind is strong; it's blowing against them, and the waters are rough. Jesus appears in the distance, on top of the water. He is heading toward them walking on the sea. They are terrified: they think they're seeing a ghost. Peter calls out to Jesus and Jesus invites him to come join him. And Peter is fine so long as he keeps looking at Jesus. But, as we know, Peter is all too human. The text doesn't say so, but we can imagine Peter thinking, "Wow! Look at me. I'm walking on water! Isn't this cool?" What the text does say is that the wind and the waves distracted Peter, and he got fearful. And that's when he started sinking down into the chaos, down below the surface of the sea. And very quickly his attention turns back to Jesus. "Help! Help me, Lord!"

If only Peter had kept his eyes fixed on Jesus. . . .

But Jesus does help. This is the Jesus who a few weeks ago told us that his yoke is easy and his burden light. The Jesus who invited all who labor and are burdened to come to him for rest and comfort and consolation. The Jesus who says, "C'mon. Have a little

faith. Have faith in me, faith in my word. I will not abandon you. Don't. Be. Afraid." Jesus will give us the strength to deal with the chaos in our lives and in our world.

"Listen to him," God the Father told us in last Sunday's Gospel. Look to him as our model and guide, our hope and inspiration.

All we have to do is keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.