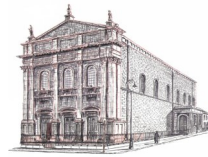




## PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 8TH/9TH AUGUST 2020



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Jesus I Trust in You

### POPE: GOSPEL CALLS US TO TRUSTING ABANDONMENT TO GOD.

Pope Francis reflected on the Gospel (Matthew 14:22-33) of Jesus calming the storm, reminding us that Jesus “is the Father’s hand who never abandons us.” Pope Francis said the Gospel account of Jesus walking on the water “is a call to abandon ourselves trustingly to God in every moment of our life, especially in moments of trial and fear.” The Gospel tells how Jesus, walking on the water in the midst of a storm, calls Peter to come to Him on the water. Peter takes a few steps, but becomes frightened and begins to sink. He calls to Jesus, “Lord, save me!” and “Jesus grasps him by the hand and says to him, ‘O man of little faith, why did you doubt?’”

### JESUS, THE STRONG AND FAITHFUL HAND OF GOD

Pope Francis said, “When we have strong feelings of doubt and fear and we seem to be sinking, we must not be ashamed to cry out, like Peter: ‘Lord, save me’.” Pope Francis said that this prayer is like knocking on God’s heart and Jesus’s heart. “We can repeat it many times,” he said. The Pope then invited us to contemplate Jesus’s action: “Jesus is the Father’s hand, who never abandons us, the strong and faithful hand of the Father, who always and only wants what is good for us.” God, the Pope said, recalling the Old Testament reading, is not in “the hurricane, the fire, the earthquake,” but rather comes to us in “the light breeze, that never imposes itself, but asks to be heard.” The Pope reminded us that God knows how weak our faith is, and how difficult our journey is, which can be hindered by adverse voices. “But He is the Risen One, the Lord who went through death in order to lead us back to safety. Even before we begin to seek Him, He is present beside us.” “Maybe in the dark, we cry out: ‘Lord, Lord!’ thinking He is far away. And He says, ‘I am here.’ Ah, He was with me! That is the Lord.”

### THE BOAT, THE IMAGE OF THE CHURCH

In the Gospel story, the Pope said, “the boat at the mercy of the storm is the image of the Church, which in every age encounters headwinds, very harsh trials at times.” He noted in particular “certain long and persistent persecutions” in the twentieth century, and added “and even today in certain places”. In such times, he continued, the Church “may be tempted to think God has abandoned her.” However, he said, “it is precisely in those moments that the witness of faith, the witness of love, the witness of hope shines the most.” The “presence of the Risen Christ in His Church,” the Pope said, “gives the grace of witness unto martyrdom, from which buds new Christians and the fruit of reconciliation and peace for the entire world.”

### PRAYER FOR PERSEVERANCE IN FAITH LOVE

The Pope continued; “Having Faith means keeping your heart turned to God, to His Love, to His Fatherly tenderness amid the storms of life in our dark and sad moments. Even before we begin to seek Him, He is present beside us and in lifting us back up after our falls and helps us grow in faith after we cry out to Him”. The Holy Father invoked the Blessed Virgin, praying, “May the intercession of Mary Most Holy help us to persevere in faith and fraternal love when the darkness and storms of life place our trust in God in crisis.”

### MAN OF LITTLE FAITH, WHY DID YOU DOUBT?

In today’s Gospel (Matt 14:22-33), the boat, with Peter and the other disciples in it, is the image of the Church. It moves through stormy waters like the Church moves through stormy times. The strong winds and high waves that attempt to overtake the boat represent Satan’s evil mission to destroy the Church. It was *the fourth watch of the night*, the darkest time and Satan’s dark mission is to instil fear and doubt into the members of the Church. The Devil wishes to remove our faith and all our trust in Jesus. Peter initially trusted and relied on Jesus’ Call - to come to Him. By God’s Power, he began walking on the water. But the wind strengthened and put a mistrust and distraction into the mind of Peter and he began to sink. The frightful strong winds symbolise Satan’s evil powers and his ability to shake our faith and put doubt into our hearts, especially when Jesus is in front of us in the Eucharist.

### GENTLE BREEZE

In the First Reading (1 Kings 19:9,11-13), the prophet Elijah tells us that God revealed Himself in a *gentle breeze*. All of Peter’s faith in Jesus was not completely lost because when he began to sink, he realised he needed Jesus, and cried out; *Lord! Save me!* Jesus put out His hand at once and held him, saying; *Man of little faith why did you doubt?* There is an important lesson for us all to learn here. When our faith encounters times of turmoil or doubt, or we find ourselves sinking into the muddy waters of sin, know that Jesus is waiting for us in the Sacrament of Confession, with outstretched hands waiting to save us. Jesus restores our faith in every confession.

### APOSTOLIC MISSION

When Jesus calls us to come to Him, He upholds us with His Power and Grace. If we rely on our own ability to keep afloat in life’s trials and tests then we will sink into the depths of despair like Peter. Our Apostolic Mission is to answer Jesus’ Call, by reaching out to people even in a hostile environment - and never giving up on them. **Note that Jesus was not in the boat but out in the hostile environment.** Jesus is asking us to have the courage to get out of the boat of our comfort zones and venture out into the deep and rough seas of society, to evangelise the mission of charity and love. Rejection and insults are part of the persecution a Christian suffers for the sake of bearing witness to our faith in Jesus. He never tires calling us to Come to Him with full Trust.

### RESURRECTION STORY

We cannot raise ourselves from the dead but must rely on Jesus for our Resurrection. To walk on water is to defy and conquer the laws and force of nature. In the same way, to rise from the dead is also to defy the law of earthly nature, but not the Law of divine nature. The victory or ability of walking on water symbolises Victory over Death. This miracle of walking on water is an affirmation of Christ’s Divinity. Remember that Jesus came down from the heights of His divinity to the depths of our humanity. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters at the beginning of Creation (Genesis 1:2), so Jesus hovers over them again bringing us a New Creation of Eternal Life in the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the Light of Life dispelling the Darkness of Death.

### WALK WITH PURITY OF HEART

A tree with deep roots has nothing to fear against strong winds. If our life is rooted in deep faith then we have nothing to fear when the devil attacks our commitment to live according to God’s Will. Jesus is saying to us today; *Courage! it is I, do not be afraid.* Jesus is not asking us to walk on water but to walk with purity of heart. When Peter got back into the boat with Jesus, the wind dropped. The disciples in the boat realising He is All Powerful, bowed down before Jesus and said, *Truly, You are the Son of God.* Let us imitate the disciples and BELIEVE always, never doubting that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God and is here to bring us out of this world, through the stormy waters before entering Heaven. We have to collaborate with His Will. Yes, it entails carrying our crosses but with the help of Jesus and Mary. Sin darkens our lives, giving us that sinking feeling of hopelessness. Jesus brightens our lives giving us that elevated feeling of Joy, Peace and Happiness. God bless, Fr. Brendan