

Homily for the Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)
St. Joseph's Neier August 9-10, 2014
Rev. Kevin Schmittgens

Central Idea: We seek the support of the Lord as we attempt to take the perilous step into a less than solid, unsure and unstable future.

*Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened;
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

Non-believers love to make fun of our gospel today. Walking on the water?!
Preposterous! Totally against the laws of physics!

And yet, if we are truly honest, all of us, and I do mean *all* of us, whether we want to or not, whether we like it or not, all of us have to take that walk, that treacherous stroll across the waters.

My personal saunter on the sea will begin at 2 am this Tuesday morning.

For the first time in thirty years, my August will be radically different. Everything I knew, everything I trusted in, everything I thought I was, will be challenged, will be tested. I was very comfortable with who I was, where I was, what I was called to do. Now, nothing is certain, nothing is guaranteed, nothing is known. Before I could enter into my safe little haven of a classroom, throw my happy dust around, teach ideas and principles that I could present in my sleep. Now, not so much.

Now I have to learn a whole different set of rules and relationships, a whole different mindset. The problems I faced in the past thirty years were familiar ones: students not doing their work, unreasonable parents, wacky schedules. All of those difficulties of the past now seem quaint and even charming. Now, my predicaments and quandaries are new and unfamiliar. The guidelines have changed. The only problem that has not changed is my propensity for laziness at times. The future not only looks cloudy and vague, but a bit menacing and ominous. Granted I have a lot of good people around me to help me get by. In fact, Borgia has some of the best and the brightest. So maybe I am being a bit melodramatic about what the future holds.

But let's face it, I still feel like St. Peter, tentatively poking my toes into the murky waters, desperate to find my footing.

But that is the story of human history, that is the story of human spirituality, that is the story of us all, whether we like it or not. Atheist, agnostic, casual believer, mystic, all of us, eventually have to step out of the boat of certainty at some time in our lives. A couple

does it as they say their vows. A student does it as they begin a new course of study in high school or college or beyond. Each and everyone of us faces it as we deal with our own mortality. And how we make those wobbly, quivering, trembling first steps makes all the difference in the world. Anyone who says to you that they don't worry about this, they don't fret about this, this doesn't bother them, is either a liar or a fool. Or both. Probably both.

This is why we need a deep and powerful relationship with God, with Christ and with the Spirit. That is why we need to learn the vital, yet devastating lesson of trust. That is why we need prayer and contemplation in our lives. That is why we gather week after week around this table, this altar. That is why we humbly and contritely recall that we are sinners and that God needs to help us in our unbelief and fear.

At 2 am on Tuesday morning until 4:30 am, I will be at Borgia High School supervising a lock-in for our students as they wait to get their parking passes. (don't ask, why) That is the job of an administrator. It will be my first official act with our student body. I apparently picked the short straw. From then on it will be a long year learning the trade. When most men my age are thinking about retirement and the good life, I am beginning a new career. I think I know a bit of what Pope Francis felt when he was elected. People ask me if I am happy about this move and my normal response is: ask me in November. I would be lying to you if I said I wasn't excited about it, but that excitement is tempered with a great deal of uncertainty, insecurity and hesitation. Those are feelings I am not used to and am somewhat uncomfortable about.

It is time, like we all have to do, to walk upon the waters, no matter what the law of physics say.