

NINETENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A

THEME: **LOOK UP TO JESUS**

Simon Peter had faith. Only a man of faith would accept an invitation from a ghost- as he thought that Jesus was- to step out of a boat and attempt to walk across water, any water, as he did in our Gospel reading today. The trouble was that the sea was rough, “for there was a bad wind”. Peter walked confidently until he felt the force of the wind. He became distracted and took his eyes off Jesus. That was when he began to sink, and Jesus had to take him by the hand to prevent him from drowning.

A lot of people play one ball game or another. It may be football, basketball, tennis, table tennis, cricket, hockey or golf. Those who know these games always tell you to keep your eyes on the ball. The moment you take your eyes off the ball, you are bound to make a mistake. That is when a goal keeper will let in a cheap goal, a tennis player will put the ball into the net, and a golfer will miss the ball altogether.

Somehow, when it comes to religion, a similar advice can be given: “Keep your eyes on Jesus.” That was what Peter stopped doing, and he began to sink. In his own case it was fear that made him take his eyes off Jesus: “... as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink.”

Something like that can happen in the life of a Christian. We start off with a great deal of faith. We believe in Jesus. We believe that he is there for us, that he is both able and willing to come to our help in any situation. At that time, we have our eyes fixed on Jesus. But let some difficulty or problem crop up in our life, and many of us will become disoriented. It could be a serious illness, a pandemic, loss of job, a serious financial crisis, a court case, failed or failing marriage, or childlessness.

We are distracted, and we take our eyes off Jesus. We begin instead to look in other directions for solutions to our problems. Some people have been known to begin to seek refuge in occultism, secret cult, secret society or even witchcraft and so on. All of a sudden, Jesus is relegated to the background, if not repudiated altogether. At that point we find ourselves sinking and may be at the very point of drowning.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to trust Jesus for he is always there to take us by the hand, so that we do not drown, as he did to Peter. Peter had to reach out in his own turn, and take Jesus' hand. When we are in trouble, we too must do the same, if we do not want to drown. We must reach out to take the hand of Jesus. The way to do this is to renew our faith in Jesus and set our eyes back firmly on him.

We must reject all the idols we have erected for ourselves as solutions to our problems, for they cannot be the solutions; in fact, they are part of our problems. The sooner we let go of them, the freer we shall be to take the hand of Jesus and be saved from drowning.