

### **Jesus walks on the water**

A large part of my ministry takes me to hospital bedsides. Every hospital bed is like a little boat floating alone on a vast and dangerous sea, entirely defenceless at the mercy of the waves. A hospital bed only has room for one passenger. Family members can come and sit on the shore offering comfort but they can't get into the boat, so it's often a place of loneliness and fear.

The passenger is someone like you or me. The waters in hospital are mostly choppy, and occasionally a category five storm breaks out and you can be sure that the faith of each patient in hospital is being severely tested. Even people of great saints in the Christian faith, like Mother Theresa, have been tormented by the perceived absence of God, who seems a million miles away.

At times when I have felt that God is far away this is what I do. I try to visualise a story in the bible, one like our Gospel reading for today. The disciples are in a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee. They set off in



daylight, but now it is night. And a force nine gale breaks out. The little boat is being tossed around in the water and it seems as if they will perish. And Jesus is absent.

But then early in the morning, He comes towards them, walking on the lake and there is deep calm all around. Peace is restored. And I picture myself in that scene in the storm tossed boat, and then I experience the peace that Jesus brings when he comes towards the sinking boat, and peace and calm is restored.

The disciples cry out in fear and terror but Jesus at once says: Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid. And then he says to Peter come to me. And Peter does just that. He gets out of the boat and walks towards the Lord. And

notice that, as long as he keeps looking to Jesus he's buoyant, but as soon as he looks at his own feet and his own strength or lack of strength, that's when he begins to sink.

At some time in our discipleship and our following of the Lord we will be asked to do something which from a human point of view is laughable or impossible. It may be a situation at home, in the work place or in the church; it may be a bereavement or an illness. Every one of us will be faced with a trying situation when it seems as though we are sinking beneath the waves of life, and the raging sea is about to engulf us.

It's at those moments, in the difficult moments of life that we have to listen to the voice of Christ as he tells us to come to him across the water. 'Come' said Jesus.

Remember how Peter keeps afloat as long as he kept looking to Jesus, and it's the same for us too. If we look to ourselves when the storms of life threaten to engulf us we will sink, but if we keep our eyes on the Lord he will see us through, because there is absolutely nothing that the Lord and you can't work out together. Thirty years in the ministry has taught me that lesson, but it's so easy to forget.

In chapter twelve of the letter to the Hebrews we read,

*Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay in the future, endured the cross, disregarding the shame of it, and now sits at the right hand of God.*

We will never be thrown back on our own resources if we walk with the Lord and keep our gaze fixed on him. Keep looking to him and we won't be swamped in the tough times because the God we worship is faithful.

Love, joy and peace to you all.

Fr. Tim