



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A 2014

It was the custom of the Cherokee Indians to enact a rite of passage for a youth to be considered a young man. His father would take him into the forest, blindfold him and leave. He was required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun would shine through it.

He could not cry out for help to anyone. The boy would most often be terrified. He could hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts were surely all around him. The wind blew the grass and shook the stump on which he sat. But he could do nothing but sit and wait.

It was a frightening and horrifying experience. And after the evening was over and the sun appeared, he could remove his blindfold. It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him. He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm. The youth, who now became a young man, discovered that he was never alone. He discovered that he had nothing to fear.

The Gospel today presents us with a powerful recollection. Peter should be praised not only for his courage but also for his faith. Jesus says "Come" and Peter leaves the safety of the boat and joins the Master in walking on the water. But wait. Peter looks around. It hits him how powerful the waves, how strong the storm, how majestic the winds. Suddenly Peter finds himself sinking, drowning in the fearful waters of the stormy sea.

Could it be that Peter's mistake was that he took his eyes off Christ? Could it be that Peter failed to trust in the power of God that gave him the ability to walk on the water? But here's the best question: could it be that Peter is a reflection of each one of us? For all of us live in stormy times. Each of us gets frightened by the harsh winds and the surging seas of problems and predicaments, illness and financial struggles which surround us. And when we feel so overwhelmed, isn't it all too easy to lose faith and just sink down? Don't we often feel like we're drowning?

Like Peter, we forget that we need to keep our eyes on Christ. Like Elijah in the first reading who is frightened by the strong winds and powerful storms, we need to discover that God's gentle love is what saves us. Like the young Cherokee, we need to discover that God is right next to us even when we are blind to God's presence.

To have faith is to trust in God. To have faith is not to deny the storms that surround us. Rather, to have faith is to affirm that in God we have nothing to fear because it is only God who calms the winds, subdues the storms and lifts us up when we think all is lost.