

Sunday Sermon, 9 August 2020 by His Eminence Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis



In today's Gospel extract, after the abundant satisfaction of the multitude of the five thousand through the blessing of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus gives his disciples instructions in the afternoon of that day to get into the boat and wait for him on the other side of the lake's shore at Gennesaret until He could persuade the masses that had gathered to return to their homes. When the masses had departed, Jesus despite the fact that He was extremely tired goes up the neighboring mountain by Himself in order to pray.

From here, the relevance of prayer in our life is evidence if Christ who was also God, as a man needed prayer, what can we mere mortals say, who on a daily basis find ourselves following in the defectiveness and ignorance of the world.

In the meantime, it had already got dark and Christ continued his prayer on the mountain. Simultaneously, a strong wind and mighty waves had arisen, sweeping the boat fairly far away from the shore. The sea-storm was so great, the evangelist Matthew tells us, that there existed the real danger of the boat sinking. Hence, the disciples already frightened, waited restlessly, for their teacher. Suddenly, as a day-

break was approaching, under the minimal moonlight the disciples seeing someone walking upon the deep waters of the Gennesaret lake which in reality is an enclosed sea-region (which covers approximately a 20 Thousand Kilometre length and 12 Thousand Kilometre breadth distance), thought that they were seeing a ghost. Shaken by their fear, they began shouting despairingly. However, Christ immediately spoke to them, reassuring them that it was their teacher, inviting them to display courage and to cast away their fear which had overcome them.

In the face of the unbelievable event, which the disciples were encountering, Peter spoke saying to Christ uncertainly, "Lord if it is really you, invite me to come close to you, walking on the water just like you." And Jesus said to him, "come". Immediately Peter came down out of the boat and having his sight fixed on Christ, he began to walk in a miraculous manner upon the waters proceeding toward Jesus. In a matter of minutes however, because of the powerful sea-storm and the incredible event, his position of attachment and his faith in Jesus was overwhelmed by fear and terror. The result was that he began to sink. However, he managed to call out entreatingly in time to his teacher, "Lord save me." Immediately Christ stretching out his hand grabbed Peter's hand saying to him in a manner full of grievance due to his lack of faith especially since he had witnessed so many miracles at his side, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

And when they had got into the boat, the evangelist Matthew tells us the continuation – the sea-storm suddenly ceased again in a miraculous way. This is why all who were on the boat approached Christ in wonder and love worshiping him and saying, "Truly, you are the son of God. You really are, beyond any doubt, the son of God, our Lord and God". This confession of the Apostle helps us, my beloved to understand the importance that Christ has in our life as the incarnate entity. For this reason, the stance adopted by Jehovah witnesses and thousands of others who deny the natural Godliness of Christ is unacceptable. They accept Christ as mere prophet and teacher as do the Muslims and Jews. The importance of the entity of Jesus Christ in our life has salvific dimensions. The possibility of our salvation is assured from within the historical reality of the salvation which God offers to man through the sacrifice and the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is the real God like the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Like Peter, as long as his attention was fixed on Jesus, he could proceed unrestrained towards Him without sinking and without taking into account the wild sea-storm. The same applies to Christians: as long as they have their attention fixed on Christ, as long as they believe wholeheartedly and victoriously in their lives without the pile of their problems and the difficult persons whom they encounter daily terrifying them.

The opposite is true when someone has little faith, when his faith in Jesus is shaken or disputed and tend to become naught. Then the result is disillusionment, fear, boredom, failure, misfortune and finally the danger of loss as was about to happen in the case of Peter. This is why my beloved, we would be able to say that this scene in today's Gospel constitutes a real representation of our conflict with the problems and the difficulties of life whose solution depends on the degree of our faith in our Savior Jesus Christ. Thus, in some way, in the person of Peter we recognize ourselves. There are times when his lack of faith reminds us of our own lack of faith.

Peter's sudden change from enthusiasm to desperation is something that also characterizes our life. Christ's complaint to his pre-eminence Apostle, "You of little faith, why did you doubt," is a complaint, which is often directed also to many of us. Despite all these doubts however, to our entreating plea, "Lord save me," as in Peter's case, Christ's answer is affirmative and salvific.

Our life, my beloved, many times resembles a journey on a dangerous stormy sea. It is difficult to traverse the great sea-storm everywhere unforeseen dangers lie in wait. Moments of peace and tranquility are few indeed. Often the unsparing waves and violent storms knock us about. These are the sorrows, the unfavorable situations, the failures and the disappointments which we encounter in our life we usually begin full of enthusiasm like Peter, with dreams, to fight, with hopes of winning in life, to reach the port of happiness and good fortune, to create something great for ourselves and for those around us. However, as soon as we take the first steps, then the waves of pain and failure raise up before us threateningly. Unpleasant surprises strike us like lightning unforeseen obstacles disrupt our course. We expected things differently and they occurred differently. There are times when we struggle to hold onto appearances so as not to sink. But our human potential is limited. As people, we have limits we endure up to a certain point. Today an illness, tomorrow an injustice, then a family problem, an unhappy marriage, a divorce, then the upbringing and the marriage of children, then a death, next the ungratefulness of our own relatives and other people which we made benefaction to often through deprivation and sacrifice.

All these things for someone who lives far away from the consciousness of the content of Christian life, as an attempt and continuous struggle and sharing in the life of Christ, as an imitation of Christ, as pure love, with the aspect of sacrifice for our neighbour, drive him to spiritual fatigue, depleting even his last energies. This however as people who “are clothed in flesh and inhabit the world” at some moment of our life can also happen to us. Thus many times although our strengths are depleted, the sufferings and knocks of life continue. Destruction lies in wait threateningly. At moments like these, we feel the earth disappearing underneath our feet. There are times when in the face of the innumerable and enormous difficulties of life, before the injustice of the world and the dismissal of it we are controlled by the temptation of passive silence or even more so of flight and self-pity. Peoples’ malice, even that of those whom we find next to us, with their distancing from the mercy and justice of God also feed us with poison. Thus, when we do not live a spiritual life, seeing only the incarnate Jesus Christ as perfect and the corresponding relativity of people and especially that of unrepentant people, our struggling zeal becomes frozen and our enthusiasm is dissolved. Then we feel our strengths becoming paralyzed and our soul bending. Our mind becomes dull the danger exists of us falling into the abyss of despair and disillusionment. Disappointment which constitutes one of the greatest sins makes us put an end to all our attempts, to desert our struggle, denying our responsibilities and our obligations.

For the struggling Christian, flight and self-pity do not constitute the best solution. In reality, this stance constitutes an expression of cowardice. Our patience and our indifference in this situation means co-operation in the malice and injustice, which exist around us (James 4:17), “ Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

Hence, the desertion of the struggle of life always has negative results which drive a society to the destruction of worthy persons and to the adoption of unworthy persons, in primitive barbaric forms of life where preference is given to injustice, to ulterior personal interests and to the justice of the strongest, even if that person is the biggest criminal.

Hence, my beloved, with the desertion for the struggle of life, in reality it is as if we are condemning ourselves and together with us our society, the people to whom we have responsibilities and obligations. We have however this right; for the consistent Christian, in the struggle of life and in his fight with injustices there is no alternative solution. There is only one possibility and one way out – personal battle. The struggling Christian with sacrificial moral convictions fights proudly from within

his humility to face every kind of unfortunate circumstance calling upon the grace of God, steadying himself upon God's help (That which is impossible to mankind is possible to God). It is the help which Christ promises us His reassurance "be of good courage, it is me do not be afraid" is the guarantee of our victory in the face of life difficulties. These difficulties are never bigger than man's possibilities when man steadies himself through prayer in the help of his creator.

In reality it is the viability of loneliness which discourages us in our struggle with the difficulties and problems of life, making us cowardly and often deserters. And thus occurs when we begin to distance ourselves from God's path, when we do not try in our lives to observe the commandments of Jesus Christ. Hence, the viability of loneliness on our parts is the result of our lack of faith. Because the light of the faith has already faded within us, we cannot discern the beneficial presence of god in the struggle of life. Thus, even though Jesus Christ stands next to us ready to support us at every critical moment of our life, we ignore him. Forgetting the restricting limits of our nature and perfection of the omnipotence of God, we believe only in our own strength, which collapses, and we appear to be without any support without hope without meaning in life.

[Source](#)