

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, August 13, 2023
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A

On my first foreign trip alone, I was a little afraid. At that time, I was imagining a terrorist hijacking our aircraft, or a possible plane crash. Then I was overjoyed when I was assigned to the middle seats together with three nuns. I talked to the sister next to me but she cut me short by saying: "Please don't talk to us. We spend our travel time praying." I fell silent.

Then there was turbulence before we reached Thailand. Air pockets caused the plane to shake and plunge. I took out my rosary. The normal lights went off and emergency lights were turned on. When the plane had passed through the storm, the lights returned and I saw the sister clinging to my arm. I turned to her and said: "Excuse me sister, but please don't touch me. I want to be left alone!"

All of us have fears. Some fears are irrational, and others are sensible, understandable. There's a combination of these in the Gospel today. The disciples traveling by boat were afraid of the big waves, the contrary winds, and the "ghost" they thought Jesus was. Peter was frightened by the strong winds and the prospect of drowning. The disciples, too, had to confront their fears.

Today we live amidst many fears. Our lives are surrounded with intimidating factors. Some are quite easy to handle but others really demand great fortitude to solve. As Christians we are no different from the rest of humanity that wakes up to its worries and goes to bed with the same concerns.

In the midst of their fears, Jesus appeared, walking on the water, addressing the disciples: "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid". When Peter asked Jesus to come

closer to him, Jesus invited him to walk on the water towards him. It seemed impossible, but Peter did it...for a while. Jesus appeared in the moment of greatest fear to infuse faith and strength in the hearts of friends.

My dear friends, before the Lord, we need to be honest about our own fears. Surrender our fears to the Lord and put our trust in Him. Remember, Jesus invited Peter to walk on the water so that he could overcome his fear, so that his fear may be replaced by faith. Peter nearly sank, for he focused on the winds, but he was saved when he grabbed the hands of the Lord. Jesus always comes to us when the fear is greatest, when the situation is worst. He is always there with encouraging words and a helping hand.

So, in this Eucharist, let us offer to the Lord our fears. Let his love touch our hearts, and give us courage to confront the problems in ourselves and in our relationships. Let us invite Jesus to guide us as we cross through troubled waters and contrary winds. When we are filled with faith, the only important thing is to know that Jesus has done the impossible for us –walking on water—so that we, too, can rise above our fears and experience the triumph of faith. “Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid”.