



WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST  
CAMINANDO EN LA LUZ DE CRISTO  
MACHÉ LAN LUMIÉ AK JÉZHKRÍ

## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

August 10, 2008  
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19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle

### Gospel reading

**Matthew 14:22-33**

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening, he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night\*, he came toward them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

*\*Between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. The Romans divided the 12 hours between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. into four equal parts called "watches."*

### Brief commentary:

We know that Matthew's Gospel is the only one to use the word church, not buildings or institutions, but the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "assembly." In today's reading, the "boat" may be a symbol of this church, and the "sea" a symbol of the forces of evil fighting against her. Alone, the disciples could not hope to save their boat from the menacing storm. Only the presence of Jesus could bring them to safety. Yet, when he appeared, they failed to recognize him and thought he was a ghost. Matthew's version of this story is the only one that tells of Peter's decision to leave the boat and walk out to meet Jesus. All went well until Peter began to focus on his own efforts and was overcome by fear. It is impossible to overcome such obstacles if we take our eyes away from Jesus. If we focus on the "wind" and ignore God's caring presence we will sink just like Peter!

#### Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- The calming of the sea recalls the Old Testament theme of God's control over the chaotic waters (See Psalms 65:8, 89:10, 107:29).
- Matthew uses, "you of little faith" to refer to those who are disciples of Jesus but whose faith is not as deep as it should be.
- Peter stands for all the followers of Jesus who may display great enthusiasm, but little faith in the face of adversity.

### For our shared or personal reflection:

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

1. Do I take time to pray alone as Jesus did? Explain.
2. Do I sometimes get so overwhelmed by fear or doubt that I fail to recognize the presence of Jesus in the midst of my storms? Give examples.

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 448; 2602; 2610.