

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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Love the collects for Ordinary Time – they're so straightforward and practical.

- HELP US...to live out our faith, loving you and neighbor; provide a witness to you as the Church
- TODAY: Grant us the spirit to think and do what's right, so that we can live according to your will
- Doesn't get much more basic than that, and today's gospel lesson gives us a pretty black-and-white picture of it in action

Now, if we're going to talk about how our own natural abilities can only take us so far, it seems like Peter would have to be at the center of the story.

- Deeply devoted to Jesus so his first instinct is often good, but his follow-through less consistent
- Transfiguration: didn't know what to say, but that doesn't stop him from speaking; Greek "answers," even though no one's asked a question or addressed him

See his "Ready-fire-aim!" personality at work here too – while everyone else is hunkered down and terrified, Peter stands up and gets out of the boat!

- Once he recognizes Jesus, Peter's first instinct is to believe, which is good.
- When Jesus says, "Come," he steps out in faith, also good.
- But Peter also brings all of his flaws with him, which is not good.

The wind and the waves overwhelm him and he begins to sink.

- So Peter cries out to Jesus, who immediately pulls him up out of the water.
- It's the classic Wile E. Coyote moment, where everything's fine...until he looks down.
- And that's the pretty obvious takeaway:
- No matter what's going on around you, KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS!

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Now, before you start jumping out of boats, let's back up a little bit and clarify some of the things that are going on here:

First of all, Peter's a man of action, yes, but he's not dumb or crazy.

- When Peter makes a mistake it's not because he does things that don't make any sense; it's because he acts without understanding.
- So while Peter's boldness is what makes him willing to act when no one else is, that's not what gets him out of the boat – he gets out of the boat **because he recognizes that it's Jesus who's called him.**

We need to understand this because it's what makes Peter's action **the good decision.**

- Looking at the boat, it's pretty easy to see the other 11 disciples as the model for good decision-making, but that's not the case.
- There are times when we're faced with a choice and we know in our hearts where Jesus is leading, but we still hesitate.

We always want to be prudent and thoughtful, but we also need to be able to respond when we *know* Jesus is calling us, and it's so important to make it a habit before the seas get rough.

- When we're anxious and struggling, and our world seems dark and difficult, there are a lot of things that can distract us from the voice of Jesus, which of course is why Peter ends up losing *his* focus.
- At that point, if we're not tuned to the voice of Jesus and ready to follow, we can find ourselves like the other 11 disciples in the boat – still paralyzed even though Jesus is present!

We can develop the habit of responding to Jesus' voice by simply bringing him into all of the choices and actions we already make on a daily basis, and here's how to get started:

As we're getting ready for Holy Communion, think about the rest of your day today is going to look like; the things you'll do, decisions you'll make, the places you'll go, the people you'll see, and so on.

- Offer that to God and invite him into them.
- Lord, be present with me in the things I need to do.
- Lord, how can I do your will in making these choices?
- What do I need to do so that the people I meet encounter Jesus in me?

Sometimes God will make himself especially known in those things, sometimes not, but either way you're opening your life up to him, which is what he wants more than anything else.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, strengthen our faith and devotion to you, so that we can be bold in responding whenever and wherever you call us, knowing that no matter how fierce the storm around us might be, we are never outside your reach. AMEN.

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