

Dear Friends,

Last year at this time Governor Hogan signed an executive order requiring public schools in the state of Maryland to start classes after Labor Day beginning with the upcoming school year, 2017-18. With that order summer vacations have been extended a little longer this year and I imagine that some people in the parish may be taking advantage of that extra time by going to the ocean or lake in the next week or two. Like them, Jesus and the apostles head to the water in today's gospel, though not for the same purpose as us. After feeding the 5000 with a few loaves and fish, the disciples get in their boat first to cross the lake with Jesus soon to follow.

Without Jesus the twelve labor against the turbulent sea. Seeing their distress Jesus goes to them, saving them, his power conveyed by his walking on the choppy waters. After momentary fear and Jesus' reassurance, "*Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid,*" Jesus challenges Peter to also walk on the waters, and Peter did. But I wonder, what was Peter thinking? Did he actually think he could walk on water as effortlessly as Jesus? It's striking how confident he is as he hops out of that boat. But that confidence soon fades.

Because of Peter's fear and weak faith, he began to sink. When Jesus stretched out his hand to catch Peter, he reminds him, and us, of his constant care for us. He teaches us that no storm – no matter what it may entail - will overturn the boat in which we sail; no water – no matter how turbulent - will swallow us up in darkness. Jesus assures us that he is always with us to catch us.

May we never forget that we are never alone on the waters of life. Jesus is always with us. He is in the boat with us at all times, during the day and during the night, during the storms and the quiet times. Jesus does not abandon anyone who comes seeking his help, mercy or forgiveness. He walks upon the waters. He calms the storm. He guides the boat of our lives into safe harbors. This is good news; this is the joy of the Gospel!

Peace and blessings,
Fr. John