

Rev. Paul A Hottinger

Tossed About and Trust Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, August 2, 2016
8:15 AM **Jer 30:1-2, 12-15, 18-22; Mt 14:22-36** (St. Eusebius of Vercelli, bishop)
(Jesus meant that when we have faith we really can reach out and he is there.)

Today Matthew is giving us a little triptych, a tableau, and we can put ourselves within it. There are two fundamentally different places in the story, and there is the present moment of the audience. There's Jesus on the mountain alone, and there is the boat on the water. Now **the boat clearly represents the Church, and the disciples tossed by the waves represents a very common experience in Church.** The Church is often assailed by all kinds of storms. It is, after all, a bark. It is something, in a way, flimsy. This people forget. **Jesus promised to be with the Church for all times,** and because of that they imagine the Church to be some sort of impregnable fortress. That is not what he meant. He meant as today he is always available. **He meant that when we have faith we really can reach out and he is there.** He meant that he has the power to calm the storms, which is evidenced by today's story. He didn't mean the Church is supposed to be a fortress, impregnable, solid like a rock. Peter is the rock, not the Church. The Church is a bark, a boat.

Now Jesus walks on the water because he is living with the Father. This is what it means "he went up on the mountain and was alone to pray." **He is with the Father, and being with the Father he is not tossed about by the winds.**

Now as you well know in actual situations if you were out on a lake and there was a great storm, the air above the water is just as turbulent as water itself, but this is about something else. This is about how **Jesus being in communion with the Father brings to the storm a certain kind of calm and lightness of being and, if you will, weightlessness.** And it is available to the people in the boat, and eventually **they actually do experience this calming when they accept his presence.**

So this is a lesson the Church has to learn and relearn and relearn again. Again here, as in the Old Testament reading, **the issue is a personal relationship with God.** In the Old Testament God actually is angered because he regards the worship of the Israelites as a form of adultery because **he wants to be their spouse.** He wants a relation with them, yes, on the same level as husband and wife, and they want some other kind of relationship, some sort of business deal. And God is offended profoundly by this. **God wants intimate relationship, a relationship of trust and dependence.** And the Israel of old didn't quite learn that. A new lesson is offered in the Gospel of Matthew. The question is: **Will we learn it?** Not we just in our individual lives; it's not about our individual lives. **It's about our communal life as disciples of Christ.**