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“What Does the Story of Jesus Walking on Water Mean to You?”

“At once [Jesus] spoke to them, ‘Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid’”. The story of Jesus walking on water is one of the most profound and recognizable passages of the New Testament. It is a story of trust, and the belief that God will deliver us from all hardships if we just have faith. It has a universal appeal even outside the Catholic Church, as its message of spiritual certainty transcends cultural and ethnic barriers. The reasonable truth that it holds can find common ground in many world religions, as God’s truth applies to all.

This story is one of my favorites from the Bible, as I find that it truly speaks to the hearts of all people. I love the comforting feeling that it gives, showing that Jesus is there for us even in our most difficult circumstances. He is always there to pull us out when we begin to sink under the waves of a world that wants to pull us down, to make us less than ourselves. We are inspired by the vivid image of Jesus reaching for Peter, pulling him out of the darkness into the light. There is no greater comfort than this, no greater consolation that our God will rescue us.

It begins with talking about how the Apostles were being tossed around in their boat, uncertain of what was going to happen. It says, “Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it”. The winds were fighting against the boat, just as hardships try to weigh us down in our daily lives. The world doesn’t want us to grow close to God, to know that we are loved. It just wants us to be blown in any direction more fitting to those who promote evil and seek selfish gains. God has a higher calling for us as His children. Through Baptism, we were brought into full communion with the Church, and through the sacraments we nourish that sacred bond. Everyone has their distractions that try to pull them away from receiving the sacraments and improving their faith. I personally am very busy with school work, sports, and other responsibilities that it is often hard to find time for daily prayer and reflection aside from praying a Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy with my family every night and attending mass each Sunday and some weekdays. This story reminds us that there are many things trying to blow us away from Jesus, and we have to recognize that. If we are strong and trust that God will deliver us, we will be with him forever.

In the story, Jesus came out to meet the Apostles in the midst of the storm. They saw Him walking towards them on the water as the calm center of not only the storm, but of all creation.

At that moment, they were terrified because they didn't know what to believe. If I were in the boat with them, terrified for my life because of the violent storm and then looking up to see a man walking on water, I would be just as scared. However, this does not last long as Jesus told them it was Him and that he is there for them. This comforting image so vividly describes how Jesus works in our own lives. When we are scared and frightened, He always has our back, assuring us that everything is going to be alright. This is very encouraging to me because knowing that he is always there is so consoling. Jesus never abandons us.

The part of the story that really speaks to me the most is when Saint Peter walks on the water toward Jesus. Frightened by the storm around him, Peter begins to sink, thinking that all hope is lost. He took his eyes off of Jesus and because of that, he couldn't stay afloat. However, Jesus was there to lift him up and rescue him. This shows us just how much Jesus loves us and that He wants us to be with Him. We will not fall to the temptations of the devil if we hold fast to the conviction that Jesus is walking with us, waiting for us to climb to Him in our time of need.

The story speaks volumes to me personally, as the determination to keep our eyes on Jesus is one of the most important lessons that I ever learned in such a meaningful way. Four years ago, my Sittu was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It was very unexpected, as she was a very healthy person. She went from running her own sewing business, cutting down trees by herself, and taking care of my declining Jiddu, to not being able to get up on her own just a few months later. I had always been extremely close to her, as I only lived a mile down the road and would spend much time at their house. Although she struggled so much, my Sittu never lost faith. She has always been the most spiritual and holiest person I have ever known, trusting in God no matter what. One Sunday in church during the time she was sick, my family and I were sitting in the pew during the homily. The Gospel that day was the story of Jesus walking on water. I remember staring at the large crucifix behind the altar, asking God for a miracle. My mom saw me and whispered in my ear, "Just keep your eyes on Jesus and you will never drown". Since that day, whenever I am going through a tough time, I remember the image of Jesus standing on the water, waiting for me to follow Him without being distracted by the storm. I am continuously inspired by the image of Jesus' outstretched arm, and I began to envision it every time I would have a lapse of faith in believing that my Sittu would recover. I kept telling myself that if I just kept my eyes on Jesus, I would never sink into despair and doubt. As long as I kept my focus on Jesus everything would be okay. Despite all of the prayers and efforts of me and my family, my Sittu passed away on December 2, 2017, at 3:33 AM in the hour of Divine Mercy, associated with the Divine Mercy devotion that she always had a great dedication to. That, along with many other not-so-coincidental occurrences surrounding her death were signs to me of her ultimate destiny, living in heaven with Jesus for all eternity. Although I was heart-broken when she died, I never look back on that time with anger or resentment, because I know that she would want me to keep my eyes focused on Jesus no matter what. If I learned one thing from her life, it would be that faith is the most powerful thing you can have. Believing that Jesus is going to calm

all your storms in life is crucial to being who you are meant to be. Whenever I hear the story of Jesus walking on water, I think back to my Sittu's witness and I strive to fulfill God's will in my life by staying focused on Jesus. I know that I will not sink with Him to rescue me.

The story is one of the most famous passages in scripture, and for good reason. It is a great example of how Jesus never leaves us. It also paints a picture of the weakness of human nature, how we often fail to live up to that which we are called, and to that which we strive for most of all. Our fallen nature leaves us susceptible to all kinds of distractions and temptations that pull us away from our holy calling. Ultimately, we all want to go to heaven, and the story of Jesus walking on the water assures us that if we have faith, even if we succumb to the distractions of everyday life, Jesus will be there to lead us on, to bring us home.

This message is prevalent for all peoples and it strikes at the heart of humanity's quest for happiness. As mentioned in *Nostra Aetate*, an official declaration by Pope Paul VI, we see that there are a few questions that every human desires to have answered. These questions include: What is the meaning, the aim of life? Which is the road to true happiness? What is man? These questions are all answered through one's religion, and we as Catholics believe that Jesus wants all of us to live with Him forever. This is displayed in the story of Jesus walking on water, as He desires for us to keep our eyes on Him. By doing that, all our questions will be answered because we have weathered the storm and have trusted in God with all our hearts.

I truly believe that by directing our focus towards Jesus, even though the winds and storms of our lives may try and distract us, we will not drown. What an encouraging thought; the God of all life, the maker of all creation reached His hand down to rescue Peter, a human being just like us. Jesus truly loves us and calls us by name. When we fall, He picks us up and when we cry, He dries our tears. This story helps me remember this and gives me the resolve to do better, to live according to God's will. I know that no one is perfect, but there is no harm in trying. With Jesus to pick us up, we can do anything because if Peter can walk on water with little faith, we can surely run.