

Fr Ryan Homily 8-13-23

Read: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a; Psalm 85; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33

Well I think the gospel is begging me to talk about St Peter today which I know I did a little bit last Sunday as well in not the best light admittedly. If you remember Peter is talking when he should be listening to Jesus up on Mount Tabor during the Transfiguration. But I have to say I do think Peter is an excellent human being. Not perfect but he can be taught, and he often just gets a bad rap. We're like oh that Peter always putting his foot in his mouth. Or he's too eager saying things he shouldn't. He betrays Jesus, that's a really bad one. Today he sinks and we focus on all the bad things about Peter and yeah like the gospel puts that out there for us to see because Peter's not perfect. But I don't think we should miss this, we shouldn't miss the point that this whole section of the gospel begins with every one of the apostles, including Peter, acting in faith. Right the story we just heard a second ago begins with all of them including Peter acting in faith. So why are all the disciples in a boat on the sea in the middle of the night in the middle of a storm? They're there because Jesus asked them to be. That's the only reason why any of those men would've gotten into the boat at night during a storm on the Sea of Galilee. It says He made them get into a boat and proceed Him to the other side while He dismissed the crowds. And so we have to understand this, faith got Peter into the boat long before faith got Peter to step out of the boat. It's important that we begin there. Faith got Peter into that boat before faith got Peter to step out of the boat. Because I think for most of us the bulk of our lives look like that. For most of us the bulk of following Christ in our lives looks like here I am in a boat it's storming it's dark and I'm here because Jesus would ask me to be here. A lot of us are sitting in that boat right now in a storm in the dark. In your vocation, in your discipleship, you're following the Lord for one reason – cause Jesus would have you be there. But I think for a lot of us maybe, I don't know if this is you but, we're sitting in a boat right now and we're ready to get out. Not get out and walk on water but get out and like abandon ship. And if you're in that place right now like yeah that's how I feel, I'm in the boat cause Jesus told me to be here but it's all dark and it's stormy and I hate it and I just wanna jump ship. I have to ask the question Jesus asked Peter and the question to him was why. Why do you wanna get out? Why do you wanna stop? Cause that's the question Jesus asks Peter. Now He's asking it after Peter got out of the boat, he's walking on the water, he's doing

something extraordinary until he's not and he sinks. But Jesus asked Peter the question why did you doubt? And He asks us sitting in the boat the same question in your boat in the dark in the storm, why did you doubt? Because I think the real question Jesus is asking Peter and He's asking us is why did you stop? Here's Peter walking on water and he is doing something incredible, he is sharing actively in a miracle with Jesus but then he sinks, why? Oh yes it clearly says he doubted. Jesus asked why did you doubt but the outward manifestation of that interior doubt is that Peter stopped. He stopped looking at Jesus. So faith moved Peter to walk, and doubt caused Peter to fall. And faith is what moved you and I to get into that boat with Jesus and so often doubt causes us to stop wanting to be in the boat; stop focusing on Jesus. So Jesus asked the question Peter why'd you stop. And we might have a lot of reasons we give towards that, each in our own lives. You might find yourself struggling in your vocation, whatever that might be. Maybe you're married and you wanna stop, why? Cause we're different people now, we've grown apart, this isn't the person I married, they don't listen to me, they don't care about me, they don't love me, they don't respect me, all these reasons why I wanna stop when it comes to my marriage. Or someone in their priesthood, they might wanna stop. They could say I didn't get into the priesthood to be a minister of six parishes in rural nowheresville. Or struggle simply to find a vocation. Lord I'm trying to be faithful to your ways but that makes it really hard to find the right person so maybe I just wanna stop. Or you keep giving and giving and serving and no one responds. You don't see any fruit so I'm just gonna stop. Or something else, some suffering that's been thrown into your life that you didn't ask for and it's overwhelming and Jesus doesn't seem to be helping. Or the church in it's brokenness or sinfulness, it's out of touch. The church is too political. It isn't political enough. All these reasons. Or just life as a disciple – I'm tired of following Jesus and I wanna stop. I'm tired of what He asks. I'm tired of Him making me wait. Why do you wanna stop? Because I don't feel it anymore, cause I'm afraid it's too hard or I look at myself and I know how weak I am. So there's a bunch of reasons that we can have that we might wanna stop but I don't think any of them are the reason. Because the reason why Peter stopped is the same reason we wanna stop and it's not dramatic, it's not glamorous or complicated, it's all too simple and obvious and it's too prevalent in our lives. The answer to why did you stop? Cause I got distracted. Why did Peter stop? He stopped because he got distracted. Peter is doing something he can't do, that is beyond him. He is doing

something only one other person in history has done and He's doing it right in front of him. And He invites Peter to do the same but then it says he saw the strength of the wind and he became afraid, and he doubted. Then he stopped and then he sank. He put his focus in the wrong place. He got distracted meaning that he forgot the storm wasn't affecting him. The storm had no control over Peter because of what Jesus was doing inside of him. The storm was happening, but Peter was above it and then he took his eyes off the one who was keeping him above it. And so distraction is anything that takes our focus away from where it needs to be at any given moment. What is distraction? Distraction is anything that takes our focus away from where it needs to be at any given moment. Obviously we all deal with minor distractions in our lives like the media and entertainment and getting into other people's business and that distracts me. But there are also these deadly distractions that we have in our lives whether we create them or they are just there. Distractions like I don't know the strength of the wind when you're walking on water. And they're deadly distractions why? Because they take our eyes off of Jesus and instead put them on our weakness, on our sin, on our own sickness or our brokenness. In fact I know how preoccupied some people can become with how much of a sinner they are that they've forgotten they have a savior. People who are so consumed by their wounds and their hurts and their brokenness, they fail to see Jesus trying to love them in those places. Peter can't walk on water. Do we all agree? Peter can't walk on water. Only Jesus can walk on water so Peter is receiving something from Jesus that only Jesus can give him that allows him to do this. And as soon as he is not dependent on Jesus, now the storm affects him, and he sinks. Because the brokenness, the sin, the storm, is now gonna take his life. Peter though, as I said, he's an excellent human being, not perfect but he can be taught. Because in Second Peter he says something so powerful, it's was actually the end of the second reading we heard last Sunday. He's recounting the fact that he and James and John saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain, and it says this is not a myth, we actually saw this with our own eyes. That Jesus revealed Himself as God, as Beloved Son of the Father and He says you would do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp in a dark place. Or another way of him saying that is you would do well to focus on this, you would do well to fix your focus on this truth, the truth that Jesus is the Beloved Son of God as a lamp in a dark place. Look at Him when you're in the storm on the sea when you're in the darkness fix your gaze on this because Peter knew. He had focused on the

strength of the wind and the waves, and he forgot the one who can ride the wind and treads upon the waves. He focused on how strong the wind was and he forgot how strong his savior is and I can sometimes be focused on how broken I am and forget that Jesus is the one who has come to heal brokenness. So last thing, for Peter it becomes so simple all these reasons why you stop. You say a lot of things but none of them are the reason. None of those other reasons were the reason, the reason was I got distracted. And so what happens is he begins to sink and what does he do? He looks back to Jesus and he realized the moment, the instant he turned back to Jesus, Jesus was there for him. And this is true for you and it's true for me that when we get distracted and we think I've just screwed everything up, the instant you turn back to Jesus. All Peter does, he turns his gaze, gives his focus, gives his attention, not to the distraction but to Christ and he says three words. He says "Lord save me". And the next line, the next word that Matthew writes is "immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and He caught him". The winds were strong out there. The hand of the Savior was strong enough to rise above the waves. So in your storm in your boat in your darkness in the midst of distractions, Jesus is there. And when we lose sight of Him, when we look away, all that's needed are three words – Lord save me. Cause maybe you forgot just how strong your savior is. Certainly strong enough to calm a storm at sea. You know He did that already in the gospel. The disciples saw that. Strong enough to end that storm surrounding you that's threatening to pull you down, but He didn't do that for Peter here and He doesn't always do that for us. Jesus didn't want to change the weather He wanted to change Peter. He wants you and I to change. He wants us to understand who He is. He wanted Peter to learn to focus on what He endures, to trust in the one who can keep him alive. To learn to not be distracted even when what surrounds you is terrifying because it doesn't terrify Jesus. And in the midst of all of it Peter was receiving from Jesus all he needed and even after he sank he went right back to Jesus. Lord save me. So Peter is an excellent human being. Not perfect but he can be taught. And if you see Peter in you as so many of us can, that is excellent cause you're saying I am not perfect, but I can be taught that in any storm Jesus is there and if I receive what He wants to give I'll be okay.

Amen