



Artwork by Moya Hogarth

Homily

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

There are events in all our lives which prove to be recurring memories. I would suggest that the events of the night recorded in the Gospel today would have been such an event for the apostles, just as in years to come we will begin conversations with the words, “Do you remember the summer of 2020.”

Each time I read this account of the calming of the storm and Peter’s wavering faith I am reminded of an evening aboard a ferry to Ireland, when a young girl, she can’t have been more than three years old jumped from halfway up the main stair case of the ferry into her father’s arms. The only notice he had received of the little girl’s intention to jump was a loud cry of Daddy catch me, which preceded her leap of faith. All of us who witnessed the incident were impressed by the absolute faith exhibited by the little one in her dad’s ability to catch her, despite both the distance she jumped and the instability of the boat in the stormy weather. We were also impressed by the instinctive response of the father to the cry of his little daughter.

The whole incident was a marvelous lesson on the relationship that exists between ourselves and God. We are encouraged to be like the little one who has total confidence in her father. She has no doubt that her father will hear her, and if she jumps that he will catch her. With that confidence she puts her trust in her father. The father reacts as any father would and opens his arms to catch his daughter. His catch may have been instinctual, but it was responsive and loving.

The apostles in the boat battling with a strong head wind would have known what it was to have such faith in Jesus. Challenged by the conditions at sea they welcomed the appearance of Jesus walking on the water way from shore. Peter as so often articulates what the others are thinking or feeling. "If it is you tell me to come to you across the water". Here is the confidence of the child, but that of the man falters as Jesus calls him across the water stepping out of the boat Peter is buffeted by the winds and loses confidence. Yet the arms of the father in the person of Jesus, reaches out and raises him up back into the boat.

The lessons for us are the same as that for the apostles and for Peter. No matter how complex our lives may get, Jesus is always there to listen to our cry, or respond to the call for help and to have his arms ready to catch us when we are in deepest need. We are all children in the sight of God, at times like Peter we need to have confidence that he is with us.