

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Christ is in our midst. He is and always shall be.

In this morning's Gospel we hear the story of Peter walking on water. Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and told them to go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, while he would send the crowds away. Jesus stayed behind on land to spend the night in prayer. Although being God, he did not need to pray. He did this as an example for us. We all must pray and sometimes this may mean staying up all night and praying.

When the apostles were about half-way across the sea, a storm developed and fear was coming over them. Suddenly they saw what they thought was a ghost walking across the water. Just as it would scare us today, the apostles were frightened since they thought that they were seeing a ghost. The ghost, or what they perceived was a ghost, spoke to them, saying, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." Although the apostles recognized the voice as being Jesus, the words did not take away their fears. Peter answered Him saying, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you upon the waters." Jesus told him to, "Come." So, immediately Peter got out of the boat and began to walk towards Jesus on top of the water. – Remember there is a storm going on that was strong enough that they were in fear that it would sink the boat. As Peter was walking, he saw the waves and felt the wind. He took his eyes off of Jesus and focused on the storm. No longer seeing that Jesus was protecting him he began to doubt and to have fear. Without having his total trust in Jesus he began to sink. He then cried out to Jesus for help. And Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter. As he was catching Peter, Jesus said to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" Then Jesus helped Peter into the boat and immediately the wind stopped. And those in the boat worshiped Jesus saying, "Truly, Thou art the Son of God."

We see Jesus revealing his power over nature. Jesus had created the world and had authority over all of it. Jesus could control the seas and calm the storms. This opens the door to us putting our total trust in Him. How often do we have storms in our lives? There are many storms in our lives. Sometimes we suffer from ill health. We may be suffering from poverty. We may be struggling at work or at school. We may be struggling with our relationships with our parents, with our children, or with our spouses. At times we suffer from war or rumors of war. Other times, with the weather as is happening in Louisiana with their floods or in California with their drought and wild fires.

There are so many types of storms that may affect us. But Jesus will allow us to call out to him, asking for his help. He wants to help us. Are we willing to reach out to Jesus and step out onto the water and come to him? Often, people put their trust in themselves and only in themselves. The rugged individualist, who is able to take care of all his own needs and not be dependent on anybody else. The self-made millionaire, who came from poverty and became wealthy without the aid of anyone. This person did it on their own. Often, these are heroes in today's society, but they do not put their trust in God. They do not serve God, for they only serve themselves. In fact, they themselves are their god.

Then there are also people who put their trust only in the government. If things are tough for them, they turn to the government for help. They do not try to improve their lives. They do not turn to God for help. Instead they demand that the government help them. Their god is the government. What we must realize is that there is only one God. We must also realize that God dwells within each Christian. We are temples of God's Holy Spirit as St. Paul tells us in his epistle this morning.

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" We must put our total trust in God, for "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

Unfortunately, we often become like Peter. We take our eyes off of Christ and only look at the storms in our lives. Then we begin to sink. All we have to do is cry out to Jesus for help and he will save us. That doesn't mean that there won't be tests in our lives. Often God uses these tests to strengthen us.

We are building the body of Christ which others laid the foundation and now it is our turn to build upon this foundation. And we will be tested. The work that we do will be revealed by God on the Day of the second coming. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one of us has done. If the work which we have done stands the test and survives we will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

We are building the body of Christ. What does this mean to us? What do we have to do. First, we must be Baptized and we must also make certain that our children are baptized. Then we must be Chrismated. As Jesus told Nicodemus:

"unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God!"

Then we must share in the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus taught:

"Amen, amen, I tell you; the one who believes in me has eternal life. I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven. Its purpose is that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats of this bread will live forever! Yes, the bread which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

"Amen, amen, I tell you; unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, whoever eats me will also live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven. Unlike your ancestors [who] ate the manna and [still] died, whoever eats this bread will live forever!"

Thus, we become the body of Christ. Then, as we grow older we build upon this. We learn how to pray. Our Lord gave us the Our Father as an example as to how to pray. And then we begin to follow the teachings of our Lord. We learn that we must forgive one another. But we must not be proud and consider ourselves superior to others.

We must feed the hungry. We must clothe the naked. We must give alms to the poor. We must care for the sick. We must visit the imprisoned, and all the rest that is taught by Jesus. All of this is building the body of Christ. We also must build the church. The apostles laid the foundation for our parish. The Good News was spread throughout the world. It was eventually brought here to America. And by God's mercy, it was brought here to La Crosse.

The families of Orthodox Christians saw the need to have a parish, gathered their money together, gave of their time, and built the parish of St. Elias. It was not just the building that we still worship in that was built. It was the body of Christ, the people of the parish that had begun to be built here. The foundation was laid. It was made with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw. And each man's work will become manifested; for the Day of the Second Coming of Christ.

Now, we must continue to build on that foundation. Must become holy, for this is what God calls us to be. We are to be witnesses to the people of La Crosse. We must, as St. Paul wrote to the Romans said:

“Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your rational offering of divine service. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

We must work together to build the body of Christ. We must trust in God that he will take care of us. That he loves us far more than we could possibly imagine. We must be willing to put our entire lives in God's hands. As Peter reached out and walked on water trusting that Jesus would protect him, we too must be willing to reach out to Jesus and trust him. We must be willing to take time and to pray. We must be willing to take time to do good, helping those in need. We must be willing to take time to read His Holy Word and let it become part of us. We must be prepared for the Second Coming

“when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will place the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will tell those on his right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of my Father! Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world! For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me.’

Then the righteous will answer him, saying: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?' The King will answer them, 'Amen, I tell you: as much as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'"

We must trust God and do as Jesus taught and showed us.

If called to walk on water, as Peter was called, we must be prepared.

Through the prayers of the holy apostles, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us and save us. Amen.