



My Brothers and Sisters of St. Joseph Parish,

Years ago after the papal election, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York shared a experience regarding Pope Benedict XVI (our previous Pope 2005-13). At the time Monsignor Dolan was rector of the North American College in Rome and the future Pope (Cardinal Ratzinger) was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Monsignor Dolan happened to be in St. Peter's Basilica. He noted that at one of the confessionals there was a small line of penitents. Nothing unusual about that. Pilgrims, as well as native Romans, can always be seen waiting for confession in St. Peter's. As Monsignor Dolan passed by, however, he could not help notice the penitent coming out of the confessional: a medium size man with thin white hair, wearing a black cassock. It was Cardinal Ratzinger.

That image of the future Pope emerging from the confessional is a good one for today's Gospel. We see Peter sinking helplessly and Jesus stretching out his hand to him. Now, I doubt that Cardinal Ratzinger was facing some major personal crisis. Still, every confession in some way is a plea to Jesus, "Lord, save me. I am drowning."

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the principal ways Jesus draws us out of dangerous waters. I don't know about you, but I readily identify with Peter – not in his role as chief shepherd, but as a fellow human. When the water starts getting a little choppy, I know that I need the Lord. But once things calm down, I can get a little cocky – even imagine that I can walk on the water.



Instead of thanking God for a moment of calm water, we can forget our own dependence upon him. If that deception takes over, Jesus allows a soul to sink. It is an act of mercy because apart from him we can find nothing but emptiness and misery.

We belong to a Church which is often tossed about by the waves, seeming ready to capsize at any moment. From the outside, the Church does appear to be very often disintegrating. But that viewpoint leaves something out. The One who says, "It is I. Do not be afraid." The same One invites, "Come." And in a gentle way, chides us, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Have a Blessed Week!

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