

Mass of First Holy Communion – Saturday, May 4, 2019 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 10:00am – 600 words

The fact that Jesus was walking on the water was surprising enough. But the water was also very rough, for there was a strong wind. Yet that did not stop him; he was able to go out to meet them no matter how fierce the storm! Now they were afraid; for one, they would have been tired after rowing for three or four miles in bad conditions. They would have also been a bit shaken up or out of sorts – weary and frustrated by the weather. So when Jesus came to them doing something that no one had ever done – walking on the water – they were frightened. Maybe it was a ghost! But he said to them, “Be not afraid”.

Those are his words to us, also, in so many different moments of our lives. Sometimes the world around us is like that storm – so noisy, scary even. Sometimes we are under great stress. Sometimes we’re just plain worn out! But it doesn’t matter how “crazy” things get: Jesus is always able to come to us and bring us peace. He says, “Be not afraid”. And think of the greeting he also used so many times after the Resurrection: “Peace be with you”. He offers us peace and he offers us calm – not by taking us out of the storm but by coming to us in the midst of it. Yes, Jesus wants to share in every part of our lives.

Now we know that our Lord comes to us in different ways. First, he is always close at hand through prayer: even though we sometimes get distracted and forget about him, he is always near. When we call upon him, he hears us. Second, we know that we find him in a special way whenever we read our bibles and learn about our Catholic faith. He really speaks to us in those sacred words. And the bible itself tells us that “the Word of God is alive and powerful” or “living and effective”. Through learning about and studying sacred scripture and sacred tradition we have a living encounter with Jesus Christ.

But the third and greatest of the ways that Jesus comes to us is in the Most Holy Eucharist. These dear children will soon experience that for the first time, and we congratulate them and their families on this special and important day. Every good holy communion we make brings us very close to Jesus, truly uniting us with him. Sometimes we go to communion filled with happiness and joy, like today. Sometimes life is just sort of ordinary and plain – there are many days like that! Sometimes we have sadness or pain. No matter what we are experiencing, Jesus comes to us and offers us his peace and his help.

What this gospel shows us is that Jesus is unshakable and always there for us. Sometimes it feels like we are rowing hard against the wind to find him – but then he calmly finds us. We encounter him in different ways – hopefully every day. But the greatest way that he comes to us is in the Most Blessed Sacrament, when we truly receive his Body and Blood, his full reality. We can’t see Jesus in communion, but we know he’s really there. He gives us the food we need to journey through this world to heaven. And there – in heaven – the storms will cease and the happiness will be greater than any we’ve ever had. There we will see Jesus face-to-face and live with him and our Blessed Mother and all the saints for ever and ever.