

April 13, 2024 - Saturday of the 2nd week of Easter

[Acts 6:1-7; John 6:16-21](#)

Homily

There are many mysterious and highly symbolic details in this short text by Saint John. The scene takes place immediately after the first multiplication of the loaves (which we read about yesterday). We are still at the beginning of Jesus' public life, and his relationship with his disciples is still being established. After the multiplication of the loaves, when the crowd wanted to make him king, Jesus withdrew alone to the mountain. The disciples were already used to the nights Jesus spent alone on the mountain, praying. When evening came and Jesus did not return, the disciples knew that he would spend the night there. So they went down to the lake and set sail for the town of Capernaum on the other side. John then uses one of those phrases full of mystery: "It was already night and Jesus had not yet joined them". John's reference to night also signifies confusion, lack of understanding and the absence of Jesus. The disciples were a little lost.

Suddenly a great wind began to blow. As often happens on large lakes (and Lake Tiberias is a real inland sea), very strong storms can start suddenly. John's account is extremely sparing of detail. All he is interested in is showing what the disciples are experiencing inwardly and the relationship that Jesus is establishing with them.

The disciples had already rowed about five kilometres when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming towards them. It is interesting to note that John is not interested in describing a miracle, an extraordinary phenomenon. He simply says that the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming towards them, as if it were the most normal thing in the world. In their difficulty, their thoughts and hearts turned towards him, and this faith in him made him already present. When they see him, they are seized with fear; but it is a reverential fear. Jesus then reveals himself in all the majesty of his divinity by using the expression "*Ego eimi*" - "I am" (which is enormously stronger than the insipid translation "it's me"). And he adds the recommendation that accompanies almost every appearance: "Do not be afraid".

So the disciples want to take him into the boat, but they are already at the shore. We should not imagine that the boat was miraculously transported to the edge of the lake. The most likely explanation is that, while they continued rowing, they were so totally

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caught up in their awareness of Jesus' presence that they did not realise how far they had travelled and how tired they were until they reached the harbour.

It would be easy to relate this Gospel story to what we are experiencing, either individually or as a community. I leave it to each of us to do so in the silence of our own hearts.

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