

As a Christian and disciple of Christ, you are given the dynamic capacity to “walk on water”!

Following the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, the Gospel of St Matthew records the moment when Christ walked on water and showed St Peter that he too could do the same. In the depths of the night, the disciples, far out on the lake, saw Jesus coming towards them over the water and thought that they were seeing a ghost (in Gk, *phantasma*). They cry out in fear. But the Lord encourages them, revealing that it is really him (not a *phantasma*) and that they should not be afraid. He tells them to be courageous not fearful (*tharsete me phobesthe*). This encourages Peter, who jumps out of the boat and walks on the water towards Jesus! But as soon as he questions himself, takes his eyes off the Lord and is distracted by the wind and the waves, he loses the initial confidence of faith and begins to sink. “Lord, save me!”, he cries, and Jesus lifts him up, calling him “Man of little faith” (*oligopiste*). The wind drops when Jesus enters the boat and the apostles are overwhelmed by faith and declare: “Truly you are the Son of God”.



This is an extraordinary event that highlights the confidence/boldness that comes with faith but is easily lost if we take our eyes off the Lord. We Christians, if we genuinely choose to *live by faith in the Son of God* (St Paul) can do even greater things than Christ did during his earthly life. However, we often choose to get caught up in worldly concerns, which then disturb the confidence of faith and then we begin to sink. True, the Lord will always be there to lift us up until we learn to live by faith habitually, but why do we worry and become anxious over so many things? All we need is to look to Christ and say: “Truly you are the Son of God”.

Let us look more closely at Peter’s boldness and Christ’s invitation that he “Come” to him across the water. It is as though the water itself, not something that we can naturally walk on due to its liquid state, is no obstacle to approaching Christ. The point here is that nothing can be an obstacle, as St Paul says: “I believe that nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus, neither height nor depth...nor any created thing...”. This is bold and confident. Later, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews will exhort:

*Since we have the confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he has opened for us...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope...(Hb 10:19-21).* In the Old Testament, even though Elijah recognized God’s presence in the gentle breeze, the full right of entry into the heavenly sanctuary, so as to draw near to God, had not yet been given. It was foreseen but not granted. In the New Testament, Christ is revealed as the true priest who alone can grant the full right of entrance into eternal life. It is this fact that gave Peter his boldness of faith.

It ought to make us bold too. The Greek term used a few times in the Letter to the Hebrews is *parresia*. It is sometimes just translated as *confidence* but this limits the meaning to a merely subjective sense or feeling. The word, however, while including a subjective sense, also includes an objective right, that is, the freedom to come and fully be oneself, to express oneself... The *parresia* was characteristic of the Gk city; at Athens or other democratic cities of ancient Greece, the citizens enjoyed the *parresia*, the right and freedom to intervene and speak in the deliberative assembly. Strangers or slaves did not enjoy this right. Now the disciple of Christ is given the full freedom and right to enter as children of God, not servants, into the divine Sanctuary (Presence).

A few verses later, the same author adds, “Do not throw away your *parresia*, for it holds a great reward” (10:35). And St Paul had already written to the Ephesians still more explicitly: “In him and through *faith* in him, we may enter God’s presence *with boldness and confidence* (*parresian kai prosagogen*).

It is Christ uniquely in all of Creation who makes such boldness possible, for again, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, he has been “made perfect” (*teleion*, through his own suffering). If in the Old Covenant, the High Priest was consecrated to offer the blood of goats and bulls and other animals, which did nothing to purify from sin but only prefigured the future reality, Christ, in the New Covenant, overcomes the need for sacrificial violence, to use an expression of Rene Girard, by offering his own blood. The Jewish consecration or *mille yad* ceremony required that some bloody organ of an animal to be sacrificed be placed into his hands. *Mille yad* meant to “fill the hands” and signified the priest’s consecration. However, when the translators of the Septuagint tried to translate this, they opted against a literal rendering (it was all a bit too bloody and gory) and instead used the Gk word *teteleiomenos*. The idea is that the priest needed to *be made perfect* to enter the Holy of holies. However in Christ’s case, his having been made perfect has a real, interior efficacy and a twofold efficacy at that, for it is both for himself and for us, that we might enter perfect heavenly, eternal communion with him.

And this is why we ought to be boldly confident, since we have been gifted with the full freedom of children of God and the full right to enter loving communion in the eternal Holy of Holies, and nothing can come between us and Christ, unless we allow it, hence we sink if we allow the worries of the world to sink us.

Let us keep our eyes on Christ our Eternal High Priest and be truly bold and confident in faith.