

Walking on Water Daily



Jesus Walking on the Sea of Galilee by Paul Brill and Frederik van Valckenborch, 1590s

In chapter 14 of St. Matthew's Gospel, we find the account of one of Our Lord's more spectacular miracles: His walking on water. In it, He manifests in both a literal and a symbolic way, the *power* of His divinity. By walking on water, Our Lord literally shows us that He has power over all creation and its laws; symbolically, He shows His power because the sea is often used in Scripture as an image of the evil, chaotic forces of the world. By walking on the sea, Jesus manifests to us that He is the complete Master over all evil and all the forces of disorder in the world.

When the disciples see the Lord walking on the water they cry out in terror and say that it is a ghost. By identifying this figure who is walking on the sea as a ghost, the disciples are making an attempt to maintain the *normalcy* of their world. In the world of our everyday experience, men are not able to walk on

water and so one way to explain what appears to be a man walking on the sea is to deny that he is a real man of flesh and blood. In a sense, it would have been more reassuring for the disciples if it were a ghost because ghosts can do that sort of thing, but real men cannot.

What this miracle, along with the other miracles of Our Lord show is that we, in fact, live in a universe where God can and does break through and go beyond the normal course of things; He goes beyond the normal course of nature. To live in a universe where God can break into the everydayness,

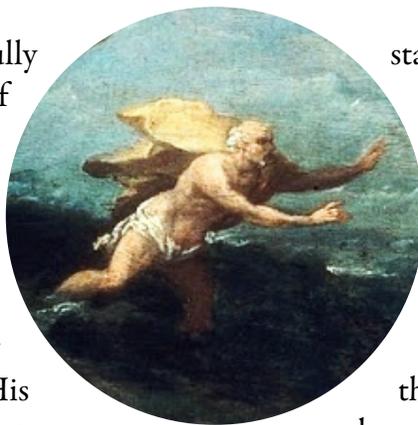
“To live in a universe where God can break into the everydayness, the normalcy of our lives, is a little unsettling, a little frightening to many.”

the normalcy of our lives, is a little unsettling, a little frightening to many. It means that God is real and in active contact with us and is actively working in our world. Many people in our modern world find that prospect fearful and unnerving. We live in a time that is very much influenced by a certain kind of pseudo-

scientific ideology and a false philosophy that systematically and categorically denies the possibility of any such miraculous intervention by God or even denies the possibility of God bestowing on men supernatural abilities. In fact, much of this false philosophy and scientific ideology arose precisely to keep God out of our world so that we could maintain what some would consider a sense of comfortable normalcy. However, as G.K. Chesterton points out, the really incredible thing about miracles is that they *actually happen*. Hence, it might be worth considering a little more carefully what it is that makes us so afraid of God and His closeness to us. Why would the notion that God is present and active in the world make us uncomfortable? And, if the notion that He is so close to us makes us uncomfortable, at least in some way, why would we want to spend our day in His presence? Is our notion of God such that we really believe that He looks on us with kindness and goodwill and has our best interests at heart?

Returning to this episode, St. Peter asks the Lord to command him to come out on the water with Him. In asking this, Peter is requesting something that clearly goes beyond his own power. He is asking for something that requires 100% dependence on the Lord. He is, in effect, asking for a share in Christ's own power. And in making this request, it may seem to us that St. Peter is asking for something quite extraordinary; it may seem that he is asking for something and taking a risk that few followers of Christ would ever be asked to take. But when you think about it, aren't we all meant to ask to step out on the water with Christ every day? Not in the sense of asking for a miracle each day, but in the sense that, every day, we are meant to live a supernatural life, a life that exceeds our own power; a life that is only possible by participating in the power

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of Christ. Every day we are supposed to open ourselves to the light and inspiration of the Holy Spirit and to govern ourselves according to this light—that is, according to a light that goes beyond our natural powers, beyond the natural light of reason. Every day we

are called to overcome, in some way, the evil in our lives; we are asked to continually forgive those who have hurt us; we are called to be patient with the various disorders that we inevitably meet both within and without. Just try to be perfectly accepting and at peace with all the frustrations and ob-

stacles and troubles that you meet in the course of one day... just try to do that and you will see that we are called to something that exceeds the capacity of our nature.

We have a tendency to want to deny that we are really called to this attitude of complete dependence on the Lord, to this heroic level of virtue, because in the face of this challenge we

feel powerless, just as we would feel powerless if we were asked to walk on water. It would be a much more comfortable and normal world if we could just ignore this aspect of our call as Christians and so there is a perennial tendency to reduce the practice of the Christian faith to those things that we feel are more or less under our own control: “if I just say these prayers and do these things and stay away from those temptations, then everything will be normal and I will be good before God.” There can be an attitude toward our living of the faith that is based more on fear than on trust. This is an attitude that resists stepping out on the water with Our Lord in faith; an attitude of those who would prefer to just sit and feel secure in the boat; an attitude that avoids all risk. So let us ask the Lord for the courage to get out of the boat every day so as to begin to experience a share in His divine power and infinite love for us. ✠