

Homily based on the readings from August 3, 2026 (Jeremiah 28.1-17;
Matthew 14.22-36)

Living in this part of Connecticut, we are blessed to have such direct access to the sea – or, at the very least, to the River and the Sound.

Growing up in a different part of the country, I rarely encountered any body of water larger than a municipal reservoir. Here we not only get to see the surf and the sand, but also great seafaring vessels: fishing boats, ferries, tall ships, and – of course – submarines.

Many of the earliest disciples, of course, were also accustomed to maritime life. At least four of the original Apostles were fishermen, and most of the others grew up within walking distance of the Sea of Galilee. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Church frequently employs nautical terminology. One of the most striking examples is the word *nave* – N-A-V-E – which refers to the portion of the church building in which all of you are sitting right now. This term is actually an adaptation of the Latin word *navis*, which mean *ship* – from which we also get such

words as *navy* and *navigate*. The most obvious reason for the name *nave* is that – at least for certain styles of architecture – this part of the church is designed to resemble an upside-down ship. [We can certainly see that here at St. Joseph's, although it may be even more apparent at St. Mary's.]

There is a deeper symbolism, though, which ties into our fundamental understanding of Christ and his Church. The Church – as an institution, rather than a building – can be viewed as a *ship* that takes us safely across the troubled waters of this world. One of the most ancient phrases used to describe the Church is the *Barque of Saint Peter* – barque in the sense of a sailing vessel, like our own Barque Eagle. Today's Gospel reading is the key to this interpretation. Tertullian, often described as the “founder of Western theology,” made the following observation around the year 200 AD:

[T]hat little ship did present a figure of the Church, in that she is disquieted in the sea, that is, in the world, by the waves, that is,

by persecutions and temptations; the Lord, through patience, sleeping as it were, until, roused in their last extremities by the prayers of the saints, he checks the world, and restores tranquility to his own. (*De Baptismo* 12)

Just as an actual ship transported Saint Peter – the original leader of the Apostles – so too the Church, the Barque of Saint Peter, bears his modern-day successor, Pope Leo. Today it is the Holy Father’s responsibility – as heir to Peter’s ministry – not only to steer the boat on our behalf, but also to implore Christ for his continued protection.

As faithful disciples, we *know* that the ship that carries Peter carries Christ as well. At all costs, we must remain aboard the vessel – not succumbing to our fears, but entrusting ourselves *fully* to our Lord’s power over the wind and the waves. If we persevere in our faith, obedient to the authority of the Church and strengthened by the prayers of the saints, then – regardless of the perils we wind up facing – we will *surely* reach the safety of the shore.