

Ongoing Synodality

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

August 9, 2026

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From 2021 to 2024, Pope Francis led the Church through a synod, or a gathering of bishops alongside other clergy, laity, and religious, with a focus on being a Church that walks together. In a world that is not moving in the same direction, where the gaps between people are ever increasing, and when wars break out anytime a world leader does not get their way, he believed that the Church should be able to rise above all this dysfunction and serve as a model of dialogue, discernment, and unity. Rising above means openness to the Holy Spirit and not being so entrenched in our own human certitudes. To this day, there is a part of the Catholic Church very hesitant about the synod. For them, the Synod seems to be going too far into ambiguity, doctrinal uncertainty, and church reform. They want a Church built upon rock.

We are certainly blessed as Roman Catholics with a Church built upon the rock of St. Peter. At the same time, we must remember that that very same St. Peter was also called by this same Jesus out of the boat to walk upon the water in today's Gospel. Yes, we have Matthew 16 ('You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church'), but we also have Matthew 14 ('Lord, if it is

you, command me to come to you on the water'). Jesus makes walking on the water a lesson about faith. For him, faith is about trusting in God at all times, even whenever we are afraid or uncertain. For the Church that follows St. Peter and his successors in the papacy, therefore, our invitation is to not just stand on rock, but also to walk on water.

In our Church and world today, we are navigating through rough waters. There are many unsettled emerging issues dividing people. While it is easier to retreat into our own comfort zones, pretend these issues don't exist, or doubt others, perhaps it is more Christian and more faithful to say, like Peter, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' There is risk involved and we could start sinking, but the greater risk is never leaving the boat. As the 2007 Aparecida Document of the Latin American bishops, largely influenced by the future Pope Francis wrote, "life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others."

The same Catholic Church that stands on the rock of St. Peter is the same one that with St. Peter is invited by Jesus to step out of the boat and walk upon the water.

How do I manage uncertainty in my life? Where do I need to take more risks in my faith life?

As we continue with this mass, let us pray that the Church would serve as a model for the rest of the world of coming together to discuss differences, finding new ways forward, and most importantly, still loving each other. In spite of the hesitancy of many with the synod, Pope Leo, another successor of St. Peter, has reaffirmed that the synod needs to continue, with a focus on 2027-2028 for the next synodal assemblies. With faith, may we, like St. Peter and his successors, at the command of Jesus, step out onto the water when Jesus says, 'come.'