

## Day 06 of Novena Walking on the Water

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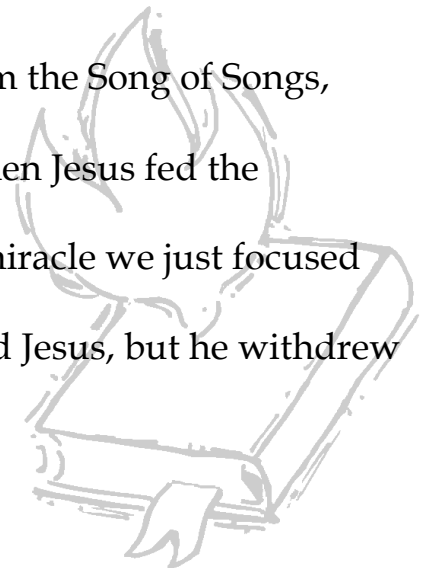
1 Kgs 19: 4-8  
Ps 34: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
Jn 6: 41-51

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As we focus on the *fifth* of the seven signs in the Gospel of John, these recorded miracles of Jesus, we are passing through a gospel reading that is not recited on Sundays and is only once recited on the weekdays. This is the story of Jesus walking on water according to the Gospel of John, chapter Six.

As I was focusing on this *fifth* of seven signs depicted in the Gospel of John, these miracles that Jesus offered and the meaning behind these miracles, I was thinking about the theme of *running*. Running seems to be something that we do when we are in haste, when we want to get to something in a quicker way than our normal pace of life.

It dawned on me that in the first reading from the Song of Songs, people were running to encounter the Lord. When Jesus fed the multitudes in the Gospel of John, which is the miracle we just focused on the fifth day of the novena, people ran to find Jesus, but he withdrew



from them. When Jesus walked on the water to the other side of the shore, people rowed, people ran to him to go encounter him because they wanted to make him king.

Many good souls do a great deal of running in the Gospel of John. When Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb, she ran to the disciples. When the disciples were told that the Lord had risen from the dead, Peter and the disciple Jesus loved ran to the tomb, and the loved disciple reached there first.

Many times we run to somebody or something when something good can happen, when somebody has something that really we want to embrace. If it is in the world of celebrity, a movie star, a record producer, a rock star, someone on television or we encounter someone famous, our tendency is to run to the person or thing because that person or thing is important to us. We often stand in attention or in respect when a notable person enters a room.

In this light, we stand at attention at the beginning or end of a Catholic Mass to show our respect for God, as if a dignitary has come in or is leaving... because God has. Above all that, when in this particular

gospel we see Mary Magdalene or St. Peter and the other disciple running towards and away from the empty tomb, it dawned on me that once Jesus gave the people what they wanted, that people who understood ran to Jesus, realizing that Jesus fulfilled his own prophesy – Jesus was raised from the dead; Jesus came into the world to save our souls, to feed our souls with his body and his blood.

This story of Jesus “Walking on the Water” is described in all of the gospels. In the Gospel of John, this is depicted after Jesus fed the multitudes to reveal the power of God commanding the seas and skies. In the other gospels, this “Walking on the Water” story associates the apostles as being afraid in the boat. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the apostles were depicted as falling asleep. When Jesus approaches them by walking on water, the disciples truly are afraid and think they have seen a ghost. Jesus then encourages Peter to get out of the boat. At first, Peter had the faith of Jesus and walked on the water. Shortly after, Peter loses his faith and resolve and consequently sinks in the water.

We are taught in the Catholic Church that this church building, if you sit in the pews and join in prayer as led by the celebrant, you sit in what might be considered the “nave” or a boat that has flipped upside down.

We are told by scripture scholars that in this light, God serves as the captain of the boat. We are told that as long as we remain in the boat, (the nave of the church) no matter what happens with the storms that shake the world around us, we are safe spiritually because God is accompanying us, is leading us on the journey.

As most things happen, though, people are not here to have their souls fed in so many ways. Rather, people cling to their earthly desires and want their bodies fed but often not their souls. On this earth, people want to encounter things that they can see, smell, taste, touch, and hear, the sensual things of life, but neglect to reflect on the things that are beyond the senses, what we call the *metaphysical*, the things of heaven, the reason why God came down on Earth.

In today’s gospel, Mary Magdalene at first did not realize Jesus had risen from the dead until the resurrected Jesus stood in front of her to talk to her. The disciples came to encounter Jesus resurrected from the

dead, and Thomas, who was not with them the first time Jesus appeared to them, doubted that this was true; without proof, Thomas doubted that this so-called resurrected individual truly was the Lord Jesus Christ. Thomas wanted to feel the nail prints in our Lord's hands, his side and in his feet.

In a very similar way, many people do not believe that God physically is present inside a church, that in this tabernacle we can encounter the real presence of God, body, blood, soul, and divinity. For those of faith (both then and now), believing in this Real Presence is what is going to get us to heaven, and this is how we get saved.

A good number of people then and now did not and do not believe in miracles. If they *did* believe, these people would come to St. Anne's Day, where so many miracles have taken place over the hundreds of years that this celebration has been offered.

These Novenas to St. Anne (as well as other devotions) have been offered throughout the world. The relic of St. Anne we have in our possession has healed so many people, but people forget. People are

into the *now*. People are into “what can you do for me lately” mentality, not about having faith in God to get us to the other side.

As we have preached concerning these “Signs,” we learn that the miracles our Lord offers are considered incidental and certainly those of faith in the past who received these miracles have left this world. What God is doing in the Gospel of John is revealing himself more and more with these “Signs” to show people that God is *above* the human senses. God is *beyond* the human senses. If we wish to encounter God, we must go beyond the human senses in order to leave the world of physical in favor of the metaphysical, the philosophical and the theological.

God is about love and salvation and sacrifice and suffering and mercy. If we understood that, then we come to church and we support the causes that God wants us to support, like a St. Anne Novena that has been with this particular church at St. Anne for 146 years.

So we are here today and we offer yet another Novena Mass. We must continually remind ourselves that if we want to get to heaven, we have to *run* to God to *run*, not walk to the Novena. We implore you to *run*, not walk to St. Anne’s Feast Day and Novena. The beauty in this

church is that we are growing so much, people are running to me, and I am trying to run away because I have got too much work and sometimes feel overwhelmed like John Vianney felt two hundred years ago.

So what I did is in the month of June, while I am recording all these Masses and then uploading them on the internet, I asked Father Uriel Martinez to return from Guanajuato, Mexico, to help me with Spanish Masses so that I could take a deep breath and get ready for what is yet to come. In July, our parishes welcome Fr. Sebastian Genoni, a Marian of the Immaculate Conception from Buenos Aires, Argentina, who is going to fly to the States and lead a nine-day parallel novena in Spanish for our community, while I lead the Novena and Feast Day in English (thank you Fr. Jim Heyd for celebrating this feast day Mass at St. Anne's!). When we precede and follow Masses with a special cabalgada (horse-drawn) procession from the Camino y Esperanza Retreat House to St. Anne's Church, then we encounter an opportunity, this wonderful opportunity to live the faith, to embrace what God has given us, and never to forget.

I thank you all very much for your dedication to the Novena and Feast Day. Thank you for what you are doing, for how much you are supporting us, for how much you are loving us. Please know that we want to thank you, we want to support you, we want to love you, which is why we are offering these novenas to you.

Please consider *running* to your local church to pray. *Run* into the church, encounter God. Please consider feeling that love, that Real Presence that will feed our souls so that we can get us to the other side of this life, so that we can leave this church and run to the people that we meet and offer the same love of God that has been afforded to us. This is our prayer.