

Maronite Monks of Adoration

August 2003

Most Holy Trinity Monastery
Petersham MA 01366-9725

Peter's Boat



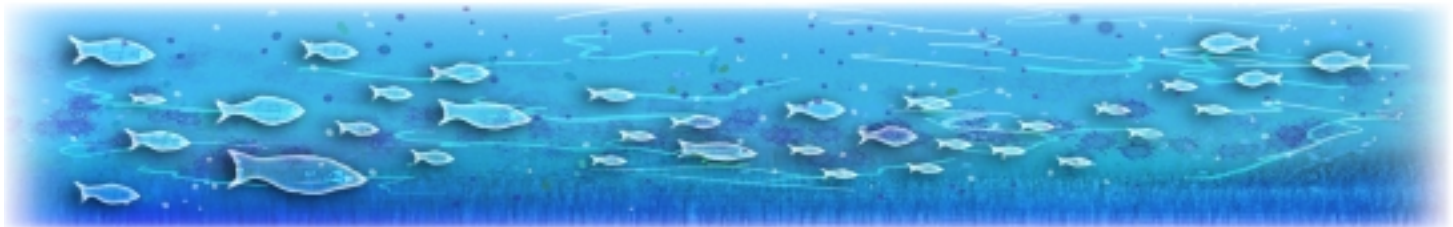
Illustration: Maronite Monks

The times can seem very depressing these days. An unparalleled de-Christianization campaign sweeps across our land. Legalized abortion on demand, euthanasia, doctor assisted suicide, homosexual marriage and the list goes on. The saddest part is that so many who profess belief in Jesus Christ have accepted the above as part of the landscape. “It’s inevitable” and “there’s no turning the clock back”, they say with a shrug. Usually when a clock keeps bad time, you do turn it back. But as Tolstoy prophesied, the time will come when “the good lack all conviction and the evil are full of passionate intensity.”

Our Lord warned that these times would come and the temptation to give up, despair or wonder where God is comes on strong. But perhaps we could look at an image from the Gospels to strengthen us in these trying times. We can look at the Gospel account of the call of the first apostles and Our Lord teaching the people from the boat of Peter. Peter’s boat is an important Gospel symbol. It’s the oldest symbol for the

Church and one most frequently used by the Church Fathers. That boat with the apostles and Jesus is the Church. The part of the church where the congregation sits is called “the nave” which comes from the Latin word *navis* meaning “boat.” From Peter’s boat Our Lord teaches the people and calls Peter to become “a fisher of men.” Our Lord continues to teach us from Peter’s boat today in the person of Peter’s successor, Our Holy Father the Pope.

Remember that Our Lord is in Peter’s boat. He is never separate from the Church or from Peter. This is an important point because of a popular false teaching which says that Jesus and “The Church” are two separate entities. On one side you have the “nice man Jesus” which makes Him a combination of a sixties’ flower child and a troubadour. On the other side you have that “corrupt institution” called the Church. The Church’s task is simply to be a sign pointing to “the nice Jesus” and to work for *equality*. Oh how our culture drools over that word!



Our Lord is always with Peter. As St. Augustine says, “Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia.” “Where Peter is, there is the Church.” By teaching from Peter’s boat and calling him to be His fisherman from there, Our Lord is in effect conveying authority on Peter to teach with His authority once Peter becomes “the Fisherman.” We have some in the Church calling for the “democratic election of bishops.” Others weigh in with statements saying that before the Pope teaches he should “consult the people about their lived experience.” Did Our Lord ever do that? Our Lord never consulted anyone when he taught or chose His Apostles. Rather he prayed to the Heavenly Father. His teachings provoked opposition and many left Him. Yet, never did he say, “Wait! Come back! I’ll change it. Tell me your ‘lived experience’. Let’s dialogue and establish a common ground.” Our Lord will never abandon Peter. We have His promise on that. So when our Holy Father teaches, he teaches from Peter’s boat and Jesus is there.

At times Peter’s boat took quite a battering. Mark, who had an eye for detail, gives us the account of the storm on the lake. The boat is floundering, all seems lost and through it

Our Lord is sound asleep with His head resting on a cushion. Today, it’s easy to feel like those apostles in the boat. The Adversary’s wind and waves are battering the Church as never before. Around the world Christians are being martyred for the Faith. Waves of scandal batter the Church in our country and in the entire Western World there is occurring what the Book of Revelation, the Church Fathers and many saints call the “Great Apostasy.” The European Union seeks to remove all vestiges of Christianity from its constitution. Our court system seeks to expunge anything doing with faith from our nation’s life. Many baptized people, down deep, no longer believe. It seems that Jesus is certainly asleep today just as He was in that boat. But just as He was there all along, He is present with us in this storm. No matter how strong the winds and high the waves, the storm will never engulf Peter’s boat (The Church) because Jesus, the Son of God is there. When he awakens what does He first say? Not, “Sorry, I must have dozed off.” Nor did he tell the weather to calm down but, “Oh you of little faith.” No matter how stormy the situation, Our Lord is always present to us. The storm and the darkness will never overcome Peter’s boat.

Our Lord tells Peter to put out into the deep for a catch. Peter had to take a risk. It was morning and they had been out all night and caught nothing. What does a carpenter know about fishing anyway? Yet Peter took the risk and was never the same again. Our Lord’s call to put out into the deep is a call to all of us in Peter’s boat to take that same risk and thus be transformed. A transforming faith, not “structures of equality” will change the world for the better.

This transforming faith will translate into us becoming the fishers that Our Lord commanded we become. Make no mistake about it, this is a command to all. The bishops, priests and religious are called to this in a unique way, but the call is also to all in virtue of our baptism. It requires faith and courage to put out into the deep. Do we have that courage and conviction? As stated above, we are in the midst of an

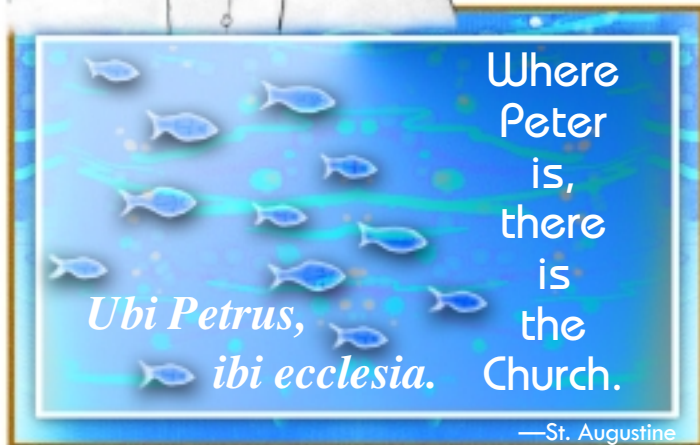
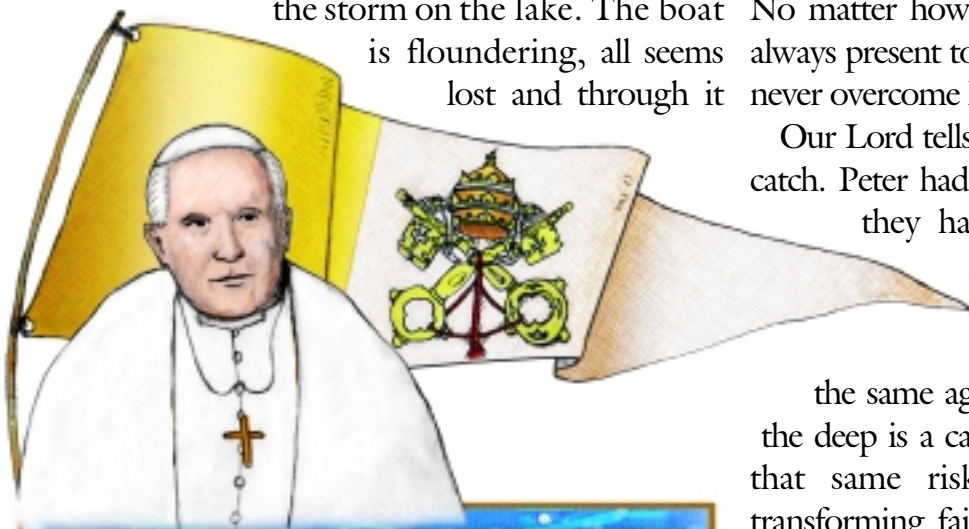


Illustration: Maronite Monks

abandoning of the faith unprecedented in the Church's existence. Did you know that the five states with the highest percentage of Catholics (Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey and New York) are the most pro-abortion in the country? All ten Senators support abortion on demand and partial birth abortion. Interestingly, the most pro-life states are where the Catholic population is minimal. That statistic alone tells more about the condition of the Church in the United States than all the statistics about how many baptisms there were, etc. We're afraid to put out into the deep. A craven materialism and desire for "feel good experiences" has choked off the Faith just as the growing weed choked the sprouting seed. Putting out into the deep means we might have to suffer to defend life and stand up for the Gospel. Our Lord wants so much to give us that kind of faith. It's there for the asking. Are we willing to let Him in as Peter did on his boat?

We might think that we're not up to the task. We have weaknesses, we sin, we feel so ordinary. "I'm not a saint like that." Neither was Peter. He was very weak.

Making promises he didn't keep, putting his foot in his mouth and ultimately denying Jesus, Peter didn't seem rock like. But he had a heart. Our Lord saw that heart. He saw what Peter could become and did become. He sees the same with us. In spite of our weaknesses we too can become fishers. We need to be strengthened. There's no better way to do so than before the Blessed Sacrament. While in the Church or chapel we are in Peter's boat and Our Lord is truly there with us. He will never permit the wind and waves to overpower us if only we trust in Him. He was with Peter and will never leave him. He will never abandon us.

So stay on board. Great things are starting to happen and remember they always start small. Recall the parable of the mustard seed. The Holy Spirit is being poured out in a special way at the start of this new millennium. The seeds for a great restoration which will sweep away the storm are being sown. And while the present storms continue to rage and gather intensity, the Pope, on Peter's boat, keeps smiling. Obviously he knows something that the Adversary doesn't. ✕