

## HOMILY NOTE: SUNDAY MASS CCC EASTWOOD 13 AUGUST 2023

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year A 2023

-----

A week after the 37<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, our Sunday's readings today bring us back to that very significant event in the life of the Church and of the young people around the world. Every four years since its inception in 1986 inspired by St John Paul II, young people around the world gather in different parts of the world to celebrate their faith for one another, for the Church and for the world. This year was no different when they met in Lisbon Portugal as recent as last week. Attended by about 30 cardinals, 700 bishops and 10,000 priests, they joined Pope Francis in celebrating the closing Mass for about 1.5 million attendees.

Towards the end of his homily for this closing Mass, Pope Francis asked for a "bit of silence" from the pilgrims, saying: 'Now, in a brief moment of silence, each of you repeat these words in your own heart: "DO NOT BE AFRAID"'. Then, he said: "Dear young people, I would like to look into the eyes of each of you and say: Do not be afraid...it is no longer I, but Jesus himself who is now looking at you, He knows each of your hearts, each of your lives; he knows your joys, your sorrows, your success and failures. He knows your heart. Today, he says to you, here in Lisbon at this World Youth Day: "**Have no fear, take heart, do not be afraid**".

In the first reading from the first book of the Kings today, we recall the story of Elijah, a great prophet and a man of great faith.. But because of his insistent opposition to idolatry, Queen Jezebel wanted to kill him. Terrified that his life was in great danger, he fled into the wilderness. Having lost all hope he took refuge in a cave. A beaten and broken man, he just wanted to die. Yet, it is here that he rediscovers his mission and vocation as a prophet. In the turmoil that surrounds him, he recognised the Lord's voice and the promise of a new beginning. Reassured by that experienced, he was able to go on.

In the Gospel, we saw how Jesus made the disciples get into the boat to go on to the other side. They were still on a high after witnessing how Jesus was able to feed such a great crowd fully satisfied and with plenty of left overs. But they had no great fun in the lake as they struggle to weather the wind and waves and making little progress in their journey. As they battle the head-wind and the heavy seas, they saw someone walking towards them and were the more terrified. 'It is a ghost' as they cried out in fear. It was then that Jesus called to them saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was then that the impulsive Peter seeks proof that indeed it is Jesus. He asks Jesus to call him out onto the water. Jesus gladly grants this request. However, once he is walking on the water fear and doubt overtake him. As he felt the force of the wind, he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' Jesus said to him, 'Why did you doubt?' The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

Faith in Jesus will enable the disciples to do the work that Jesus has done. Peter walks on water. The five loaves and two fish feed a multitude of people. The disciples of Jesus can and will participate in the work of the kingdom of heaven.

Throughout the week of that World Youth Day in Portugal, Pope Francis has shared inspiring words of guidance, advice and encouragement. The highlight of the week was his powerful plea to young people: *“to shine, to listen, to be unafraid.”*

Asking the question what we will like to take back with us from here, the Pope said, ‘I would respond with these three words: *to shine, to listen and to be unafraid.*’

**The first: to shine.** Jesus is transfigured. On the mountain of Transfiguration: “his face shone like the sun” (Mt 17:2). With this brilliant burst of light before his three disciples Peter, James and John, Jesus is preparing them and the disciples for the dark night of the Passion. Reminding the pilgrims gathered, the Pope said: ‘We too need something of this burst of light, so that it can fill us with hope as we face the many failures of each day and the darkness that assails us in life and respond to them with the light of the resurrection of Jesus for he is the light that never sets, the light that shines even in the dead of night. By welcoming Jesus into our hearts and learning to love as he does, that is what makes us shine, makes us do the works of love.

**The second: to listen.** On the mountain of transfiguration, a bright cloud overshadows the disciples and a voice was heard: “This is my Son, the Beloved... listen to him!” (Mt 17:5). Listen to him. Listen to Jesus, that is life’s secret. Listen to what Jesus is saying to you. Take the Gospels and read there what Jesus is saying, what is he is saying to your heart for he has the words of eternal life for us as he reveals that God is our Father, that God is love.

The first word: to shine, so be radiant; then, listen in order to stay in the right path; finally **the third word: to be unafraid.** DO NOT BE AFRAID. How often we encounter these words in the Bible and the Gospel: “Do not be afraid”. These were the last words spoken by Jesus to his disciples at the moment of Transfiguration: “Do not be afraid!” (Mt 17.7).

The Pope explained that after having a taste of the glory of heaven, the disciples descended from the mountain to face the challenges that awaited them and we too must follow in their footsteps: that if we hold firm to the light of Christ, we too can live our lives free from fear.

As ‘Mary arose and went with haste’ to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Pope Francis then commissions the pilgrims saying:

*“Go forth then, bringing God’s radiant smile to everyone! Go and bear witness to the joy of faith, to the hope that warms your hearts, and to the love that you bring to everything you do. Shine with the light of Christ. Listen to him so that you, too, may become light of the world. And do not be afraid, for the Lord loves you and walks at your side. With Jesus, life is born anew, always.”*

-----

