

Unleashing Prayer

(from the STM Bulletin – August 20, 2017)

You have to love Peter. So impetuous and trusting. So human. So much like us in being afraid and falling short. But in the Gospel when the storm-tossed Apostles see Jesus walking towards them on the sea (Matt 14:22-33), Peter remembers to call out to Jesus in his need. “Take courage” says Jesus when the terrified Apostles think they see a ghost. Peter has courage enough to step out on the water when Jesus calls. But when the winds rise and the seas roil, he falters and sinks. “Lord, save me!” he prays to his Lord and immediately Jesus does, bringing Peter back into the boat.

Prayer can be that simple; it is that powerful.

We in the boat, the “Barque of Peter,” the Church, are called to encounter Jesus, to go out and bring Him to others, and change the culture. That is the point of evangelization in Detroit and of the pastoral letter *Unleash the Gospel*. Archbishop Vigneron is leading us to become “joyful missionary disciples” whose “goal is to extend the kingdom of God on earth by making the world a place where Christ is known and loved” (p.29). That seems like asking us to walk on water! Out there are rough seas hostile to Christianity. Out there are strong cultural currents of secularism, a dictatorship of relativism, and tolerance of everything but ... tolerance!

“Lord, save me!”

Staying close to Jesus and responding to His call to evangelization begin with prayer, whether as a parish or as individuals, especially when the task is difficult ... or even terrifying. The preparation for Synod 16 began with more than a year of prayer for the New Pentecost by the whole Archdiocese! Appeals to build our lives, our families and our parish on a solid foundation of regular prayer are found throughout *Unleash the Gospel*. Read the pastoral letter today. There is a link to it on the parish website.

Here are some key passages from *Unleash the Gospel* on prayer:

- “Christian life becomes ... a series of encounters with Jesus, especially through prayer and the liturgy, which continually deepen our relationship with him.” (p.13)
- “Prayer and intercession are indispensable components of the new evangelization, since God the Holy Spirit is the principal agent for unleashing the Gospel. Prayer is the way we access the unlimited divine power of the Holy Spirit...” (p.29)
- “Intercession has always been the hidden engine of the Church’s mission... Intercessory prayer cultivates the soil for the sowing of the Word. It can stir up spiritual hunger in a whole city or region, so that the hearts of even those who are far from God are prepared to hear the Gospel...” (p.30)

Next week, more from *Unleash the Gospel* on how important regular prayer is in our families and parish.