

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts, be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Once there was a little girl by the name of Megan who was a precocious 9 year old. Like many kids her age — even kids who lived years before she was born, like many kids, she was afraid of a monster that lived under her bed. The problem was what should she do about it?

Unlike other previous generations she did something kind of unique about that monster. She sat down at her computer and used the software there to tell her story about how scary the monster who lived under the bed was, and about how she wanted it to go away. And then she told how she solved her problem — she put the monster under her brother's bed. In her story she included pictures about herself, her bed, her brother, her brother's bed and the monster.

Little Megan dealt with her fear **that** way. In today's gospel we see disciples who had a fear filled surprise of their

own. After the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus sent them across the large lake called the Sea of Galilee — and Jesus went off to be alone to pray.

It was near Passover and there was a full moon. While on the shore praying, Jesus sees the disciples having problems with the boat in the darkness and in the rough weather. So he comes to them, walking on the water. Now I don't know about you, but if I had been there I would have been petrified — to see a ghostlike figure walking on the water toward my boat in the moonlight. And they were scared! Very afraid. And Jesus seeing their fear says, "Take heart, it's me, Jesus; don't be afraid." Who's he kidding. A ghostlike figure on a dark, moonlit windy sea? Who wouldn't be afraid?

When they realize who it is they are probably still shaken. In Matthew's version of this story Peter then gets out and steps out on the water first one step then another — just like Jesus. Then he thought, "Am I losing my mind?" That's real water out there; These are real waves; That's real wind blowing around

me! Help me, Jesus, I'm sinking!

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But what Jesus asks of us can be even more difficult sometimes.

What He asks of us is:

First -- to love the Lord our God with everything we are, everything we have. Jesus calls us to love God with our hands and feet and mouth and emotions; to love God with the work our hands do, with the places our feet take us, with the things our eyes see, with the words our mouths form, with the emotions that affect the lives of those around us. Jesus asks us to love God with our 24 hour days, our money, our education, our technology, our individual and very personal gifts and talents.

Then he asks us also to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. To love all our neighbors. Unlikeable folks; the wealthy and the poor and the middle class; all colors and races of people, all creeds of people, all ages of people. Even gay and

straight folks.

As Christians we think we know what we ought to do. So we muster up all our courage and step out into the midst of Christian living. First one step, then another and yet another. But wait! That's real poverty out there. Those people are really hurting and starving. That's honest to goodness hatred coming from my neighbor, and it's directed at me. That's my hard earned money I'm giving away. I'm in over my head. I'm sinking in a sea of human needs. The demands of this Christianity business seem sometimes just too great. Lord save me!

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Well, our first mistake is that we forget to step out onto the right water: the water of Baptism. When we are baptized, you and I, we are 'sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever.' It is God's presence within us that turns simple courage into faith; and it is faith, not just courage, that is able to sustain us in the long haul.

Our second mistake is that we forget that Jesus does not ask us to go anywhere that He's not already been, or to do anything that he's not already done. We are invited to follow Jesus, not lead him. He is there with the lonely, the rejected, the broken, the forgotten; he is at the side of the suffering and the condemned. Wherever there is human need, our Lord is there, asking us to step out where we can and be his witnesses; witnesses of his amazing love.

It's in the strength of baptismal faith that we take those first steps. But when our faith and courage falter — when the demands on our time and resources seem just too much — it is then that we have to remember that we are loved by God as if there were only one of us.

We have been liberated not from sinning, but from the crushing burden of sin, we call that forgiveness. We have been liberated not from dying, but from the victory over death; we call that resurrection — and new life.

So in this Christian living business we get up and fall back

down, up and down, we are energized sometimes and very afraid at other times.

The hard part is that we are also called to forgive in the same way that we are forgiven. And that can be really tough.

But God comes to us in many ways; He allays our fears. With that young girl Megan — her fear was banished with the help of a computer; with us it may be in the life of someone we love or many other ways.

Jesus said, have no fear — I am with you. We must never forget that. *In nom.....*