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“Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid” (Matthew 14:27).

Nm 12:1-13; Matt 14:22-36

Nazareth is only 40 miles from Capernaum, so it is likely Jesus visited there often, perhaps with Joseph for carpentry jobs or supplies or with his family to enjoy the lake. The large lake plays an important role in the Gospels. The first disciples were chosen there, and numerous boat crossings provided teachable moments as Jesus gained their trust and demonstrated his power over nature. We might imagine the boy Jesus sitting by the lake and pondering its mysteries and power as he reflected on Genesis and Exodus and the new creation and freedom God would offer the world through him.

Leaving the security of the shore to push out into deep water to catch fish or to face turbulence was the perfect classroom for teaching his disciples the mystery of the death and resurrection he would undergo and then invite them to share. Faith taught them to see his divinity as he commanded the wind and subdued the surging waves of death. He offered them a baptism that would give them the courage to face coming storms and tread fearlessly on the waters of death as he had. Jesus was preparing them to understand that their relationship with him was a face-to-face encounter with God.

Moses' unquestioning authority came from that same direct, intimate communion with God. Miriam and Aaron learned this, though punishment for their criticism fell only on Miriam, a flagrant bias Jesus would correct by revealing his risen glory directly to another Mary and to the women who were his first prophets and evangelists. Peter would falter when invited to step out of the boat onto the rolling

waves of faith. Paul would have to have to be untimely and violently reborn to grasp the immense mystery of the Christ in us. The church is often swamped and nearly sunk to teach its sailors to renew their faith and trim their sails to catch the Holy Spirit.

I am blessed to swim each day at the YMCA, letting the water teach me in almost childlike ways to trust it as it carries my aging body back and forth, lap by lap, breath by breath. I find baptism, freedom from my sins, hope in the flowing mercy that carries us all. Refreshed and back on *terra firma*, I am glad to be alive to the miracles that await me and us all in every encounter. I have not tried walking on water, but often imagine lowering the nets of my mind to catch glimpses of God, Jesus sitting by the lake reflecting the divine image and likeness back at the world he came to transform with love. How blessed we are to be called to immerse ourselves daily in the Word.

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