

THE JOURNEY BY BOAT – SYMBOL OF OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 20 JUNE 2021



During the homily, Father Gerry moves around the church, indicating the relevance of today's Gospel passage to the design of our church building of St Joseph's and the Mission of our community.

WHO WE ARE – IDENTITY & MISSION

As we look around **our church building**,

drawing on the early Christian symbol of church community as a boat, we note

- the bow shape of the sanctuary – we journey on the boat out into the world
- the sail on our roof – the Holy Spirit enables us to move out into the world
- the cross of Jesus in the reflection pool as our mast – we follow Jesus into the world
- the Baptismal fonts near the front door, reminding us that in baptism, we begin our Christian journey together, not as lone individuals, but as community, as family.
- the wonderful view through the large windows to creation, and the earth our common home.
- The Holy Family Statue, reminding us that we are all one family on our journey
- The Pascal Candle, reminding us that Jesus is our Light on this journey of faith
- the two tables of the Eucharist and of the Word in the sanctuary where we are nourished by God on the journey.
- The interior cross in the sanctuary, made up individual parts – placed in the sanctuary during Lent, in Holy Week, during the September Feast of the Cross, and during the COVID Pandemic since March 2020.

- The Acknowledgement of Country Plaque
- our [Parish Mission Statement](#)
- the photo of our parish pastoral councillors
- the photo of our child and vulnerable adult safety officer and role and policy description
- the photo of Pope Francis – we are members of the universal church
- the photo of Archbishop Coleridge – we are members of the Archdiocese of Brisbane.
- the Aboriginal cover design of the Book of the Gospel

- the musical instruments, enabling us to sing to God on this journey.
 - the Solidarity Candle on the altar - since late 2017 - as we stand in solidarity with those who have suffered the trauma of sexual abuse in the Church, in families and in society,
 - The candle bowl where we light candles for prayer intentions in our parish and in the world.
- Online on the parish website are our [virtual candles for prayer intentions](#).

We have **two sacred chapels – of the Blessed Sacrament and of Reconciliation**.

Inside and outside the church building we see

- our prayer garden
- the rock of remembrance for those who have been abused by the church in Australia
- The Catholic Leader tray as one of the ways we communicate our faith in the world
- the gifts from Blackall Tambo Parish in central Queensland, and the villages in South Sudan
- the statues of our patron saints – St Joseph and St Anthony
- an Icon of The Last Supper ('written' / painted by a parish member from Syria),
- a print of St Mary MacKillop as patroness of the Archdiocese of Brisbane
- icons of Jesus and of Our Lady (gifted by an Iraqi Bishop and Sisters)
- in the parish school grounds are the flagpoles for the Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.
- safety measures to protect us
- and other symbols and explanations which we see as we move around the church.

All of the above reflect who we are and our Mission.

As does this Sunday's Gospel passage.

Let us listen to today's Gospel and then ask a few questions.

Imagine ourselves in the boat, travelling from the land which we know and where we are accepted, to the other side of the sea – not knowing the response of people to us.

GOSPEL OF MARK 4:35-41

"On that day, when evening had come, he said to them,

'Let us go across to the other side.'

And leaving the crowd behind,

they took him with them in the boat, just as he was.

Other boats were with him.

A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion;

and they woke him up and said to him,

'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'

He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea,

'Peace! Be still!'

Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

*He said to them,
‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’
And they were filled with great awe and said to one another,
‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’ “*

We understand that

- they began the journey
- that they are afraid
- they cannot do this journey by themselves
- they turn to Jesus for help
- they need Jesus
- Jesus protects them
- Jesus speaks to their concerns and identifies two major questions -
‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’

We know that the Gospel of Mark was written at a time when the Christian community was being called by God to set out into the unknown.

Questions included:

- How do Jewish and Gentile Christians relate in the same faith community?
- What are the issues to be addressed as the Christian community reaches out to Gentile communities?
- How will they survive the political, cultural and religious storm in the late 60s AD with the Roman Empire?

As the disciples reflected on their journey in the boat, did they recall **Psalm 107**?

When the Christian community of Mark reflected on this episode, did they recall **Psalm 107**?

When we today reflect on this Gospel passage, do we recall Psalm **107**?

Let us read together.

PSALM 107:23-31 (psalm 106 in some translations)

*“Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.
For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits’ end.
Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*

*Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.”*

In our faith journey, we ask

- Does our courage melt away at times?
- Are there times when we reel and stagger?
- Are there times when we are at wits' end?
- When were those incredible times when Jesus created stillness for us?
- About the occasions when Jesus hushed the storms around us?

Let us pause and respond to these questions.

[pause]

THE BOAT JOURNEYS OF MARK'S GOSPEL

A boat is featured several times in the first half of Mark's Gospel.

In **Chapter One**, James and John had been in their boat mending the nets, when Jesus called them and they immediately followed him.

In **Chapter Three**, he told the disciples to have a boat ready for him, due to the people crowding around.

In **Chapter Five**, stepping out of the boat, Jesus immediately meets someone needing great healing.
Afterwards, getting back into the boat, the healed person begs to be with him.
Some verses later, Jesus crossed back again in the boat to the other side, where a great crowd gathered around him.

In **Chapter Six**, Jesus walks on water to the disciples in the boat to answer their cry and to save them.

Then we are told that

*‘When they had crossed over,
they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.’
‘When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him’.*

In **Chapter Eight** Jesus

*‘immediately he got into the boat with his disciples
and went to the district of Dalmanutha.’*

And afterwards

*‘he left them, and getting into the boat again,
he went across to the other side.’*

We are told a practical detail that

*‘the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread;
and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.’*

Sometimes the boat journey itself is calm in Mark's Gospel,
and twice a boat journey requires faith and the power of Jesus to silence the wind.
Even in the calm journeys, there are people waiting on shore with immediate needs.

Sometimes our journey might be calm,
and sometimes we are buffeted by the storms in our lives.
Sometimes we arrive safely, and then immediately, we need to be available to others.

Mark's community weathered the storms of the day and faced critical issues.
And the inner strength they gained by reaching out to Jesus.
In the boat encounter of **Chapter Four**, Jesus is in the boat.
In **Chapter Six**, they call out to Jesus who comes to them in their need.

Today we face critical issues in the church and in the world.
Let us pause and name those issues. [pause]
Let us now pray to God about each of our responses. [pause]

We turn back to Psalm 107.

*'Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.'*

As a congregation of people, and as a parish community,
we are now invited to give thanks to God.
Amen.

Fr Gerry

readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/062021.cfm>



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