

FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

SOLITUDE AND RESPONSE

When reflecting on this Sunday's Gospel the first thought was about Jesus' going off to pray. My thoughts then went to the distinction Henri Nouwen makes in his book "Reaching Out" between being alone and being lonely. Nouwen points out that the ability to be alone can result in fruitful solitude. Jesus needed some time in solitude to maintain a clear perspective about his mission. The other thing was Jesus always prayed before making performing a significant action or making an important decision. After spending 40 days praying in the desert and just prior to commencing his public ministry, he called his first disciples to follow him. In today's Gospel, he prayed just before he took the action of approaching the disciples on the water. After that time of praying he invites Peter to come to him. Peter does something extraordinary. He gets out of the boat and starts walking on water amidst a storm. I think sometimes Peter gets a bad rap. He may have subsequently faltered but at least he was the one who had the courage to take that first step and got out of the boat in the first place.

The question is do I spend time with God in prayer so he can speak to me in the solitude of my own heart? What is he inviting me to? What is the "boat" in my life that I need to get out of? Jesus tells us 'Courage, it is I. Do not be afraid.' Pope Francis once said, 'the response to the Lord's call enables us to do extraordinary things.' Like he told Peter on that day on the lake, Jesus tell us, "Come." Like Jesus did for Peter all we need to do is to call out to God and he will help us at once. Could this week be a time that I give greater priority to my relationship with God so that I may gain a clearer perspective as to what it is I need to do? May our prayer this week be, 'Lord increase my faith so that I may have the courage to take that first step to whatever it is you are calling me to.' Just as he wanted his disciples to know, he also wants us to understand that he is always present with us.