



# THE NEW SHOFAR

**holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty heaven and earth a filled  
with your glory, hosanna in the highest**

**August 13th**

***I believe in Jesus Christ the only Son of God...***

Today's Gospel narrative begins in an earlier story in which Jesus feeds an enormous crowd of people with a few fish and some loaves. Afterwards he sent his disciples away telling them that he'll meet them on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Evening soon came and the boat that the disciples were on was being tossed about by the waves and strong winds. Then they saw what they first believed was a ghost walking towards them on water who turns out to be the Lord himself. Jesus, witnessed by his disciples, was walking on water! Why walk on water you may ask?

**Calling and mission** of the disciples given to them by Jesus – **go to the other side of the lake.**



The walking on water by Jesus was all about mission, about fulfilling the task he

**The obstacle** – Sea, Galilee, the winds, and storm. **Jesus** stands with the **in** the storm; offers them the gift of peace **in the storm** and enables them to engage with the mission given to them.

had been given by the Father. He had gathered together a small band of followers who were to be formed as missionaries and evangelists. This was the way his work would continue after he had left them. That formation was carried out on various levels – teaching, spiritual direction, praying, observing, being with – all a kind of apprentice approach. They were to imitate their Lord and Master. How did that work out?

A disaster. Peter did not want to allow Jesus to be the Messiah in the way God had planned and incurred the rebuke *Get behind me Satan!* He also denied even knowing Jesus – *I most certainly do not know that man!* He was overwhelmed by fear. There are numerous times in the Gospels where the actions and words of Jesus fill them with doubts. We know from John's Gospel how some of his disciples turned and left him because of his teachings. They struggled with feelings of inadequacy.

## **It is not easy being Christian**

Christians were targets for aggression, mockery, rumours, persecution and even execution. It was not easy being a follower of Jesus and all would have paid a price for standing up and professing their faith. Hence the question: what do we do when there appears to be no way forward? No human solution? When we are overcome with fear, dread, doubt and anxiety? This is the situation of the Church

in just about every generation. To live faithfully the way of discipleship will bring the division and pain of which Jesus had spoken. Maybe it is worth wondering: if that is not the way I experience my Christian living, could it be I am not as authentic in the faith as I am presuming to be?

What followed for the apostles was a miraculous revelation from God. Jesus walked on water. He did this because the disciples need to be reassured that he was indeed divine. Fully human yes but that alone was not enough to provide them with the steadfastness demanded of them. However, we add God into that mix, and we know we are unconquerable. Nothing can stop us from becoming the people God has called us to be and fulfilling the vocations given to us. Why? Because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah and he comes to us with all of the power, and wisdom, and mercy, and love of heaven. This is what walking on water declared to those disciples in the boat. Not even the infamous Sea of Galilee storm could stop the will of Christ being fulfilled. He could add to this: what I did on that lake I can do in any circumstance in which you find yourself ministering. Be assured; be reassured that as long as I am with you in the “boat”, you will be victorious and the Kingdom of God shall be proclaimed and established in all nations.

### **This is such a biblical way of thinking and acting**

For the Jewish people, large bodies of water were potentially harbouring evil powers and forces that could destroy them. They remembered the opening story of God creating...*and water covered the deep*. They remembered the Flood and how waters once again covered the earth bringing with them divine judgment. They also remembered how God exercised his divine power in pushing back the waters and the chaos and creating this beautiful earth. It was also God who stopped the rain for Noah and made a covenant with him and with his descendants down through history...*never again will I destroy creation because of the sins of men and women*. God also showed his power at the Red Sea, using Moses to push back the waters and allow the Hebrew people to escape slavery and enter into the Promised Land.

God exercising authority over those things that threatened their very lives, and this sovereign rule was routinely expected of Yahweh. It was his side of the covenant he had made with them. And so it was with Jesus. His divine power, illustrated by walking on the water, bringing peace, empowering Peter to walk and water and finally calming the sea were significant memories for the early Christians. We can trust in Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. The closer we come to him; the more faithfully we imitate him, the more likely we are to experience his peace, tap into the divine powers, and find ourselves becoming all we believe we are called to be by God.

It is truly amazing how quickly the early Church spread across a hostile Roman Empire. They were persecuted by the Jews and cut off from their biblical heritage.

They were on their own and the task before them impossible. Impossible unless the Jesus they followed was indeed divine.

This is why today's gospel is of such importance for all Christians today. We are to stop worrying about our problems, the enormous challenges and threats that stand before us. As long as we keep our eyes on Jesus and keep walking forward towards him, He will be victorious through us.