

OCIA Session
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 10, 2026

Welcome and Opening Prayer

A Look at Faith!

Opening Prayer

God of faithfulness,
you call us to follow you even when we cannot see the whole path ahead.

Quiet our minds tonight.
Open our hearts to your Word.
Help us to be honest about our questions, our fears, and our doubts.

As we listen to the story of Peter walking toward Jesus on the water,
help us recognize something of our own journey.

Teach us that faith is not about having every answer.
Teach us to trust you when the waters are rough,
to reach for you when we are afraid,
and to hear your voice saying,
"Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

When Have You Had to Trust?

Personal Reflection

Think of a time when you had to trust someone or something even though you did not know how things were going to turn out.

Once you thought of the circumstance...

1. **What made it difficult to trust?**
2. **What helped you take the next step?**
3. **How did you know—or what made you believe—that you could trust?**

Table Discussion

Large Group Debrief

- What did you notice about trust?
- What makes trusting someone difficult?
- What makes trust possible?
- Can you trust someone and still be afraid?
- Can you have questions and still trust?

“God,” the Constitution on Divine Revelation tells us, quote from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as his friends, and lives among them in order to invite and receive them into his own company. Article 2

What Do We Mean by **Faith**?

When you hear the word **faith**, what comes to mind?

Faith = Believing + Trusting + Following

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1



Sponsor /Cand-Cat sharing

What happens if someone believes everything about Jesus but never actually trusts him or follows him?

Encountering the Christian Story Matthew 14:22-33

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

When it was evening he was there alone.

Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea.

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.

“It is a ghost,” they said, and they cried out in fear.

At once Jesus spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Peter said to him in reply,

“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

He said, “Come.”

Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.

But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

After they got into the boat, the wind died down.

Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying,

“Truly, you are the Son of God.”



Sponsors/Cand-Cats sharing

- What word, phrase, image, or moment stood out to you?
- Which person in the story do you identify with most?
- What do you imagine the disciples were feeling?
- What do you imagine Peter was feeling?

Entering the Story

Imaginative reading

Discussion

Where are you in this story?

The Lesson

Question 1: Peter's Faith

Question 2: The Storm

Question 3: Peter Sinks

Question 4: Jesus' Response

Faith and Doubt

O you of little faith, why did you doubt?

"What do you think Jesus means?"

Explore the possibilities.

Faith can grow.

Faith is not all-or-nothing.

Faith can begin with a question.

Faith can coexist with fear.

Faith can struggle with doubt.

Faith can grow through experience.

Faith can become deeper through relationship with Christ.

Understanding of Faith

- Faith is a response to God's invitation.
- Faith involves the whole person.
- Faith is lived in community.

Why do you think Jesus called disciples rather than simply teaching individuals one at a time?

"What Is Jesus Saying to Me?"

Personal Reflection

- Where might Jesus be saying "Come" to me right now?
- What is keeping me in the boat?
- What am I afraid might happen if I trust God?
- Where am I being invited to take one small step of faith?

Closing Prayer

Jesus,
you know how easily we become afraid.

You know the storms in our lives.
You know the questions we carry.
You know the places where our faith is strong
and the places where it is fragile.

Like Peter, sometimes we step toward you with courage.
And sometimes we look at the wind
and begin to sink.

Thank you for reaching out your hand.

Help us to trust you one step at a time.

When we are afraid, remind us:

"Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."

Give us the courage to step out of the boat,
the humility to admit when we are struggling,
and the faith to reach for your hand.

As we continue our journey toward you and toward your Church,
help our faith grow—not merely into greater certainty,
but into deeper trust, deeper love, and deeper willingness to follow.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Home work

Pray with Matthew 14:22–33 sometime during the week.

Suggest that they read the passage slowly and ask:

Jesus, where are you inviting me to step out of the boat?

And then

Jesus, what "wind" am I paying more attention to than I am paying attention to you?

And finally:

Jesus, help me trust you with _____.

Faith does not mean that we are never afraid or that we have every answer; faith means learning to trust Jesus enough to take the next step.

Dawn's notes

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Opening Intro:

Welcome everyone and briefly introduce the theme:

"Tonight we're going to talk about faith. But rather than beginning with a definition of faith, we're going to begin with our own lives. Most of us have had moments when we have had to trust someone or something without knowing exactly how things would turn out. That experience can help us understand what Christian faith means."

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Teach us that faith is not about having every answer.

Teach us to trust you when the waters are rough,

to reach for you when we are afraid,

and to hear your voice saying,

"Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Naming Our Story

"When Have You Had to Trust?"

Ask learners to think silently for a moment:

Personal Reflection

Think of a time when you had to trust someone or something even though you did not know how things were going to turn out.

It could have been:

- starting a new job
- getting married
- becoming a parent
- moving somewhere new
- making an important decision
- dealing with a difficult relationship
- beginning something completely unfamiliar
- letting go of something
- making a major life change
- calling me to make an OCIA appointment

Then ask:

1. **What made it difficult to trust?**
2. **What helped you take the next step?**
3. **How did you know—or what made you believe—that you could trust?**

Table Groups

Invite the learners to talk over these three questions

Tell them:

You don't have to share something deeply personal. We are simply trying to notice what trust looks like in ordinary human life—You have ten minutes.

Large Group Debrief

Ask:

- What did you notice about trust?
- What makes trusting someone difficult?
- What makes trust possible?
- Can you trust someone and still be afraid?
- Can you have questions and still trust?

Write key words on a easel

Possible responses:

**relationship — experience — vulnerability — risk — evidence — love — fear —
uncertainty — surrender — hope**

In the box ask them to draw God.

“God,” the Constitution on Divine Revelation tells us, quote from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as his friends, and lives among them in order to invite and receive them into his own company. Article 2

God, in other words, is a deep well of love and offers us the gift of divine friendships. God actually lives among us and invites us to be close to the divine heart. How can we respond to such an awesome invitation? What can we say for our part? Perhaps the only possible human response to such a divine offer is to allow ourselves to be wrapped in God's arms, as it were, and allow ourselves to be loved. Let me say that again-- but this time give yourself a hug... the only possible human response to such a divine offer is to allow ourselves to be wrapped up in God's arms as it were and allow ourselves to be loved.

We call this response to God by a name we call this faith.

Then make this transition:

We often think that hate is the opposite of love, but it is not, both love and hate are passionate feelings the opposite of both of them is indifference or apathy.

We often think faith means being certain. But our experiences suggest something more complicated. We can have questions and still trust. We can be afraid and still take the next step, as we learned in yesterday's gospel.

Reflection

What Do We Mean by *Faith*?

When you hear the word *faith*, what comes to mind?

Let learners offer responses.

You may hear:

- believing
- religion
- church

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

- trust
- God
- doubt
- prayer
- certainty
- rules
- hope
- something you cannot prove

Then ask:

Is faith primarily believing something, or trusting someone?

This is an important distinction.

When I was about 20 someone asked me to picture God. What does God look like. I had always thought about the old guy on a throne, sitting on a cloud. She continues. By asking what my God did. Did I though did... ok, God loves, is there, friendly listens, challenge, that I though of Jesus, leader, prophet and my favorite. Teacher! Then I thought about sacrifice, unconditional love, and I thought about time, forever and ever and before there was before. Suddenly the old guy on the cloud was outdated and Way way way too small.

Explain:

Christian faith certainly involves what we believe. The Church has a rich body of beliefs and teachings. But Christian faith is more than accepting a list of statements. At its heart, faith is a relationship with God. It is our response to a God who has first revealed himself to us and invited us into relationship.

Faith = Believing + Trusting + Following

We believe in God alone. We trust in God and in what God reveals to us through grace period we believe in Jesus Christ, God's word made flesh, and the one who dwells among us. We believe in the Holy Spirit in whom we find strength, courage, and the insight of faith. Indeed, we were it not for the spirit, we ourselves could not believe in the first place. The spirit reveals God to us and only in God's spirit can we give ourselves over, and entirely, intellect, will, soul and heart, in faith.

Sponsor /Cand-Cat sharing

What happens if someone believes everything about Jesus but never actually trusts him or follows him?

Then introduce the Gospel:

Yesterday's Gospel gives us a picture of faith that is much more human—and much messier—than simply being certain.

Encountering the Christian Story Matthew 14:22-33

Before reading, give context:

This story comes immediately after the feeding of the five thousand. The disciples have just witnessed something extraordinary. Now Jesus sends them ahead in a boat while he goes off to pray. During the night, the disciples find themselves in a storm, a scary storm. Not common, but something that truly happens on the Sea of Galilee

If you're one of the lucky people who has a part highlighted, please read your part—Slowly and with passion.

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat
and precede him to the other side,
while he dismissed the crowds.

After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

When it was evening he was there alone.

Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore,
was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night,
he came toward them walking on the sea.

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.

"It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.

At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter said to him in reply,

"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

He said, "Come."

Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.

But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened;
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter,
and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

After they got into the boat, the wind died down.

Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying,
“Truly, you are the Son of God.”

After the reading, allow **30–60 seconds of silence**.

Then say:

Don't try to explain the passage yet. Just notice what catches your attention—It may be the same thing that caught your attention yesterday. Savor the moment. What sticks out. What speaks to your heart?

Sponsors/Cand-Cats share

Say:

Do not immediately interpret the passage.

Let the Gospel speak first.

Ask:

- What word, phrase, image, or moment stood out to you?
- Which person in the story do you identify with most?
- What do you imagine the disciples were feeling?
- What do you imagine Peter was feeling?

Entering the Story

Invite learners to imagine themselves inside the Gospel.

Say:

"Close your eyes if that is comfortable. Imagine that you are in the boat with the disciples."

Read slowly:

"It is night.

The wind is strong.

The boat is being battered by the waves.

You cannot control the storm.

You cannot see clearly.

And then you see someone walking across the water."

Pause.

"What would you think?"

Pause.

"What would you feel when you heard the words, 'Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid'?"

Pause.

"Now imagine Peter hearing Jesus say, 'Come.'"

Pause.

"Peter steps out of the boat."

Pause.

"For a moment, he is actually walking toward Jesus."

Pause.

"Then he notices the wind."

Pause.

"He becomes afraid."

Pause.

"And he begins to sink."

Pause.

"Jesus reaches out his hand."

Give another moment of silence.

Then invite them to open their eyes.

Discussion

Ask:

Where are you in this story?

Are you:

- sitting safely in the boat?
- wanting to get out?
- stepping toward Jesus?

- looking at the storm?
- beginning to sink?
- reaching for Jesus?
- watching someone else struggle?

This can lead to rich personal reflection

The Lesson

Question 1: Peter's Faith

Peter says:

Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.

Ask:

Does Peter begin with certainty?

No.

He says, essentially:

If it is you...

Ask:

What does that tell us about faith?

Peter has questions—and he still moves toward Jesus.

Question 2: The Storm

Ask:

Why do you think Matthew includes the storm?

Possible responses:

- Life is not always peaceful because we believe.
- Following Jesus does not eliminate difficulty.
- Faith is tested in uncertainty.
- The disciples learn who Jesus is in the midst of the storm.

Make the point:

Jesus does not promise Peter that there will be no storm. Jesus invites Peter to trust him in the storm.

Question 3: Peter Sinks

Ask:

What changes when Peter takes his eyes off Jesus and focuses on the wind?

Then connect it to life:

Say and can say you cannot, both are true when that is what you believe.

*What are the **winds** that can make it difficult for us to trust God?*

Possible answers:

- fear
- grief
- uncertainty
- financial pressure
- relationships
- illness
- failure
- loneliness
- disappointment with the Church
- unanswered prayer
- doubts about God
- feeling unworthy

Question 4: Jesus' Response

Peter cries:

Lord, save me!

Jesus immediately reaches out his hand.

Ask:

What does this tell us about Jesus?

Then ask:

Does Jesus wait for Peter to have perfect faith before helping him?

No.

This is an important insight

Peter's faith is real, but it is imperfect. And Jesus does not abandon him because his faith is imperfect.

Dawn 's faith is imperfect, but Jesus is still with me, in the game cheering me on.

Faith and Doubt — 10 minutes

Jesus says:

O you of little faith, why did you doubt?

This verse can sometimes sound like Jesus is simply criticizing Peter.

Ask:

"What do you think Jesus means?"

Explore the possibilities.

Then emphasize:

Notice that Jesus does not say, 'You had no faith.' Peter had faith. He stepped out of the boat. His faith was simply incomplete and fragile. Kindof like yours and mine.

This provides an important message for people, you seeking the Catholic faith and us old timers.

Faith can grow.

Faith is not all-or-nothing.

Then:

Faith can begin with a question.

Faith can coexist with fear.

Faith can struggle with doubt.

Faith can grow through experience.

Faith can become deeper through relationship with Christ.

Ask:

How does that understanding of faith compare with what you thought faith was when you were younger?

Understanding of Faith

Now connect the Gospel to the Catholic understanding of faith.

Explain simply:

Faith is a response to God's invitation.

God takes the initiative.

We do not manufacture faith by ourselves. God reveals himself and invites us to respond.

Faith involves the whole person.

Faith involves:

Mind — What do I believe?

Heart — Do I trust God?

Will — Am I willing to follow?

Life — How does my faith change how I live?

Catholic faith is not simply believing that God exists. It is responding to the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Faith helps us to peer into eternity and glimpse what eternal love is like. So we walk by faith, not by sight. Saint Paul said that to the Corinthians.

Faith is lived in community.

Peter is not alone in the story.

He is part of the disciples.

Likewise, Christianity is not simply:

Me and Jesus. Or the trinity of me myself and I.

The Christian life is lived within the community of the Church.

Ask:

Why do you think Jesus called disciples rather than simply teaching individuals one at a time?

Decision and Response — 15 minutes

"What Is Jesus Saying to Me?"

Returning to the Gospel.

Jesus says:

Come.

Ask learners to spend several minutes in silence with these questions:

Personal Reflection

- **Where might Jesus be saying “Come” to me right now?**
- **What is keeping me in the boat?**
- **What am I afraid might happen if I trust God?**
- **Where am I being invited to take one small step of faith?**
- **What “wind” tends to distract me from Jesus?**

Connecting Faith to the OCIA Journey —

Now explicitly connect the session to their journey toward becoming Catholic.

Say:

“OCIA itself is a kind of stepping out of the boat.”

Ask:

- What brought you here?
- What questions are you still carrying?
- What has surprised you about this journey?
- Where have you experienced God?
- Where are you still uncertain?
- What would it mean to continue moving toward Christ even before every question has been answered?

Emphasize:

You do not have to have everything figured out before you can take another step.

On the contrary

The Church invites you to bring your questions into a relationship with Christ and into the life of the Christian community.

Closing Prayer

Before we begin this prayer I'd like you to think about a few people in your life who have passed on the faith to you. What do you remember about their sharing of the faith with you? To whom will you also pass on this faith?

Jesus,
you know how easily we become afraid.

You know the storms in our lives.
You know the questions we carry.
You know the places where our faith is strong
and the places where it is fragile.

Like Peter, sometimes we step toward you with courage.
And sometimes we look at the wind
and begin to sink.

Thank you for reaching out your hand.

Help us to trust you one step at a time.

When we are afraid, remind us:

"Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."

Give us the courage to step out of the boat,
the humility to admit when we are struggling,
and the faith to reach for your hand.

As we continue our journey toward you and toward your Church,
help our faith grow—not merely into greater certainty,
but into deeper trust, deeper love, and deeper willingness to follow.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Now take your place among the people of God, in the church and knowing that we all hold the same fate

Home work

Invite learners to pray with Matthew 14:22–33 sometime during the week.

Suggest that they read the passage slowly and ask:

Jesus, where are you inviting me to step out of the boat?

Then:

Jesus, what "wind" am I paying more attention to than I am paying attention to you?

And finally:

Jesus, help me trust you with _____.

They can fill in the blank privately.

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We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

When Have You Had to Trust?

Personal Reflection

Think of a time when you had to trust someone or something even though you did not know how things were going to turn out.

Once you thought of the circumstance...

4. **What made it difficult to trust?**
5. **What helped you take the next step?**
6. **How did you know—or what made you believe—that you could trust?**

Table Discussion

Large Group Debrief

- What did you notice about trust?
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Why do you think Jesus called disciples rather than simply teaching individuals one at a time?

"What Is Jesus Saying to Me?"

Personal Reflection

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- What am I afraid might happen if I trust God?
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