

JANUARY 8, 2025 FATHER ERNESTO DE CICCIO

In Mark's Gospel, his version of Jesus walking on the sea is different from other accounts. We don't see Saint Peter trying to walk on the sea with Jesus, but it's a great miracle. Who but the Son of God could have such power over the forces of nature? He could walk on water. Have you ever wished you could do that? Unlike others, Jesus didn't perform miracles to feel special or better than anyone else. Everything he did was for a good purpose, including walking on water to reach his disciples who were straining at the oars.

There's a really interesting line in the Gospel that says, "He intended to pass them by." Imagine that—they're struggling, and he seems like he's going to do nothing. How could Jesus ever ignore people's plight? That's where Jesus is so different from us. He could have said, "Not my problem. Not my business. I don't have the time." How often do you use those lines? Despite being busier and more important than any of us, Jesus always found the time and the heart to help those in need

Maybe he intended to pass them by to show how human attitudes would be. But he couldn't just pass them by; he went to their aid. You've got to love the attitude of the disciples—they thought he was a ghost because they believed he was too good to be true. But he was the real thing, fully human, like us, and fully divine, God's love made visible.

We've been celebrating the Christmas season, and now we're in the time of the Epiphany, when Jesus is revealed to the nations. This is one of the many examples where we see Jesus being revealed to his own disciples. After he had just multiplied the loaves and the fish, feeding thousands from a little bit, the disciples' hearts were hardened because they didn't understand that he was the Son of God, come down from heaven. What did they think—that he was just some kind of magician? Is that what we think? Was he just a great preacher? He was that, but for us, Jesus cannot

just be an interesting person of history. He was alive then, and he should be felt alive in our hearts right now.

What do we celebrate at Christmas? Jesus coming down from heaven to dwell among us. Every year, we celebrate these feasts because we want Jesus to be born in our hearts. Let's not harden those hearts like the disciples did. Let's open our eyes and see God made visible. Isn't it wonderful, the God that we have? A God who cares, who will always show compassion, especially in our times of trial. A God who is merciful and forgiving, who welcomes everyone, like he welcomed the wise men from the East. For our God, no one is a stranger. We're all children.

By walking on the water in today's Gospel, Jesus showed himself to be the Son of God. And even more, by simply caring, he showed us who God is—a God of love and compassion. So, let's never think that the Lord does not care. He cares for us more than we care for ourselves. In this time of Christmas and Epiphany, all we can say is thank you, God, for coming into our lives. We can thank the Lord most of all by following his example—an example of mercy, love, justice, and compassion. Amen.