

Some people ask what you do to keep yourself amused when you aren't busy being a priest. Recently I've been collecting mottos associated with different occupations. The teachers motto runs something along the lines of "The only job where you steal things from home to bring to work." The plumbers adhere to, "We repair what your husband fixed." And airline pilots swear by, "In God we trust – everything else we check."

The question that presents itself is who do we trust. I mean, really, REALLY trust? Who is there, who you'd be willing to put your life in their hands? I suspect most of us wouldn't trust that many people that much. Family and friends? Perhaps. A policeman? A Doctor? A priest?

Some people trust no-one – and that includes themselves. It would be unusual if we all had the same answer to the question about trust, though it's probably one we've all asked at some time or other. Trust, though, is essential, as it defines who we are, what we believe and how we behave.

Now let's travel back 2000 or so years to the incident on the lake. Peter and the others have just seen the incredible miracle of the feeding of the five thousand from just a few scraps of bread and fish. The only miracle to be reported in all four of the gospels, it would have clearly left an impact on all of them as they crossed the lake. And as they crossed the lake, fighting against the wind, there, they see Jesus, calmly walking across the water. Common sense and experience tells us – as it told the disciples – that such a feat was impossible. No wonder they thought they were watching a ghost and it wasn't until Jesus announced that it was, indeed, He, that they realised that they were witnessing a miracle.

So what is a miracle?

St. Augustine gives us a really good definition. He says, "Miracles are not in contradiction to nature. They are only in contradiction to *what we know* of nature." The problem comes from the fact that most people believe that scientific laws are statements of what must always happen – something that has been proven by measurable, material tests. In the main, that's not a bad definition. Sadly, it's rarely completely true.

Science is a continually developing set of ideas and formulae. Take gravity. Most people are aware that Isaac Newton was the first person to describe gravity and to use his formulae to make predictions which turned out to be true. As a result, the date and time of eclipses can accurately be predicted many years in advance.

So far so good. But as you make more precise measurements, and you start looking at objects in motion you realise that Newton's laws are only approximations (albeit very good ones). That was what Albert Einstein worked out, and the fruits of his calculations are built into GPS satellites that you all use via your sat navs in your cars – if they relied on Newton they'd have you on the wrong road!

Now, many sceptics will say that science proves that miracles cannot happen but that's a misunderstanding of science. Science really deals with probabilities, with odds. And God can shift the odds somewhat.

Obviously, God doesn't do this often – the world would be unpredictable if He did. He may not cause miracles to happen as often as we ask for them, but he is there all the time.

Scientific laws are the way God *normally* behaves. Miracles are the ways He behaves when He wants to persuade us of His love.

As He walked on the water and the disciples cried out, Jesus told them “Take heart; it is I”. The literal translation of “It is I” is “I am” - which is nothing more than the name of God. And it was this which inspired trust in St. Peter. For just a few seconds, Peter had enough trust to put away all his knowledge of the nature of water and to be persuaded to walk out on the lake towards Jesus. Rash, impetuous man that he often proved himself to be (remember last week, he was quick to blurt out the first thing that came to mind during the Transfiguration and to start asking about making tents for Moses and Elijah), he once again let his body and mouth move before engaging brain.

Why did he do it?

Perhaps he was still on a high after seeing the miraculous feeding of 5000. Peter knew that faith could work miracles but had made the common mistake of believing that miracles can come on demand. Faith isn't just about what we believe – Peter found that out. It's also about trusting God to make decisions and to co-operate with them. Even though Peter failed in his endeavour to walk on water, God drew a good consequence out of it.

Sometimes we need to step outside of the boat and trust in God. Like Peter the Rock, we need to rock the boat a bit. It was only because Peter stepped out in faith that the disciples came to a greater understanding of who Jesus is. Similarly, when we step out in faith, we can also come to a greater understanding of God's plan for us and for those with whom we interact. The Christian faith is not for the shrinking violet but for the tempestuous tulip. Don't rely on your own strength but rather on the strength that God gives to all who ask. As Peter let go of the security of the boat, we need to let go of the security that we have in our cosy lives and step out into new ways.

Unlike Peter, if we do take the plunge, we've got to trust still further and not give up when things get too scary. Have faith in Jesus. Trust him to teach you a lesson about yourself, whether your venture ends in triumphant success or gallant failure.