



That evening the disciples went down to the shore of the sea and got into a boat to make for Capernaum on the other side of the sea. It was getting dark by now and Jesus had still not rejoined them. The wind was strong, and the sea was getting rough. They had rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming towards the boat. They were afraid, but he said, 'It's me. Don't be afraid.' They were ready to take him into the boat, and immediately it reached the shore at the place they were making for.

Next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. Other boats, however, had put in from Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten. When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?'

John 6:16-26

Went down to the shore of the sea and got into a boat

Friday 1st week in Lent

As in the synoptics, the feeding is followed by the journey across the lake, with Jesus walking on water to join the disciples. John heightens the miraculous by having them then come immediately to land. In the framework of the way John tells the story of Jesus, this account strikes an odd note. It doesn't add anything to the overall account and breaks the sequence between the feeding and the discourse that follows. Perhaps John put it in simply to effect the geographical transition from the feeding scene to Capernaum. That he might have included it just because 'it happened' would not be consistent with the rest of the gospel.

The figure of Jesus as he comes to us through the four gospel accounts is an enigma to us. How can we embrace Jesus as fully human and at the same time envisage him walking on water? But in this very enigma we have a 'sign' that points to the heart of contemporary spirituality and its recognition of ambiguity. No truth can ever be placed in a container and labelled as 'final and complete' but every time we come to a conclusion we are challenged by a countermanding vision. The ambiguity of the figure of Jesus is in itself a revelation.