

## **Homily — 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**

**Job 38:1, 8-11**

**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**

**Mark 4:35-41**

*Fr. Timothy W. Castor*

Imagine that you are with Jesus and the disciples in the boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. Even as one accustomed to sailing and fishing, there is something deep within the Jewish psyche at the time of Christ which made the experience of sailing in a boat something frightening and unsettling. The ancient Hebrews were not a seafaring people. For them, the sea was a symbol of chaos— the waves and the weather were totally unpredictable and quite fearful— something only God himself, the Creator of the world, could control and subdue. The Sea of Galilee in particular (actually, a large lake, not really a sea) was and is notorious for its sudden changes of whether. A perfectly calm, clear day can change into a violent storm in a matter of minutes.

As our Gospel story opens, the Lord has just finished teaching a large crowd of people which had gathered on the shore while he himself sat in the small fishing boat. He taught them the famous parable of the sower and the different kinds of soil, and then explained the meaning of the parable to his disciples. Now Jesus wants to move on to a new location and also he is seeking some rest because, in his human nature, he is exhausted from his Ministry of preaching and teaching. And so, as the disciples put out from shore, he lies down in the stern of the boat and quickly falls asleep. It is at this point that a terrifying storm whips the sea into a frenzy, and the disciples begin to fear for their lives. But Jesus, perfectly at peace interiorly, is not at all troubled by the violence around him. The disciples awake him— probably not because they thought he could do anything for them, but merely because they couldn't stand the sight of someone at rest while they were in a panic. "Teacher," they shout, "do you not care that we are perishing?" How can you rest at a time like this, they seem to be saying, why aren't you terrified like us? Misery loves company, so why shouldn't the Lord join his disciples in their fear?

He does wake up, but his response to the situation is something the disciples never expected. Does he commiserate with the disciples in their dire situation? No. Does he encourage them and give them a pep talk, telling them to buck up and act like men? No. Does he call out in distress to his Heavenly Father, asking God to save them from their peril? No, not even that. He directs his attention to the wind and the waves and, with a voice of authority, commands, "Quiet! Be still!"

Now, it's important to realize that the disciples were familiar with Scripture passages like the one we heard in today's first reading in which the Lord reveals to Job that he is the one who created the sea and who controls it. They knew well the Psalm which we just heard in which the Lord is acknowledged with these words: "His command raised up a storm wind which tossed the waves of the sea on high." And how the sailors "cried to the Lord in their distress; from their straits he rescued them, he hushed the storm to a gentle breeze, and the billows of the sea were stilled." The disciples knew of those incidents in times past when the Lord delivered his people, Israel, from distress by intervening in the natural order: dividing the Red Sea and the Jordan River in two, sending the plagues upon Egypt, or storms of wind and rain upon their enemies. Certainly they had experiences in their own lives when they turned to God in prayer asking for rain in times of drought or fine weather in times of storm.

And so now, when the disciples cry out to Jesus in their distress, and he responds by directly quieting the storm around them, their reaction is one of utter amazement. They have just seen a man do something

which only God can do! And they ask the inevitable question, “Who then is this whom even the wind and sea obey?”

Jesus performed this miracle for his disciples– as he performed all of his miracles– for two reasons: first, to demonstrate his divine nature. In other words, to prove to his disciples and to the people of Israel that he is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity– that he is one in being with the Father– that he is God, the Son. He did not have to pray to God, because he *is* God! And he has the power to command the wind and waves on his own authority. But the Lord performed his miracles also for another and equally important reason: Jesus rescues us and heals us and provides for us *because he loves us!* The answer to the disciples’ question, “Do you not care that we are perishing?” Is a resounding YES! He does care about them, and he cares about each one of his beloved brothers and sisters.

At the present time, we are experiencing a very serious drought. And this is only one of the many trials that we face in this life. It would be easy to conclude that the Lord does not care, that he has turned his back on us, that he is asleep while we are perishing. But Jesus is with us and he cares for us and he wants us to grow in our faith and our trust in him. What he said to his disciples he says to each one of us, “Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?” He does care about our material troubles, but more importantly, he cares about our spiritual peril. He calls upon us to trust in him even in the midst of storm and trial so that we will follow him with all our hearts, in the darkness of faith, with only the light of his truth and his promise to fill our hearts with hope. Turn to him, obey him, trust in him, and then you too will be able to “give thanks to the Lord, for his love is everlasting.”