

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD
IN THE
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY**

**12th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
June 20, 2021**

SCRIPTURES:

Job 38:1, 8-11	Even the waves of the sea are subject to God.
2 Corinthians 5:14-17	Created anew in Christ we need to live in love.
Mark 4:35-41	Jesus has the power to calm the storm.
Psalms 107: 23-36, 28-31	God is present to save us.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

Read the Scriptures carefully in your group, beginning with the Gospel. Take a few minutes in silence to hear the Lord speaking to the heart. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the Church community. What does God want the community to hear today?

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Job:

For the people of Israel, the sea was always a place of terror and of danger. The same God who had power to save them in the wilderness also has power over this even more awesome enemy. God wraps the sea in a mantle of clouds and thus subdues its fury. The people of Israel, too, will be wrapped in God's mantle. When Job has so suddenly lost everything, and his friends surmise that he must indeed have sinned greatly, God will subdue the inclination in him to rebel and to reject God.

Corinthians:

Unlike the Evangelist, Paul was not so much interested in communicating the words and deeds of Jesus. His focus is on the cross and resurrection of the Lord. God is at work for our salvation in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. The crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are extended to us so that our lives are a dying and a rising with Christ. Thus, there is a new creation. That is the new order which God makes real in us even today.

Mark:

Schooled in Hebrew culture and immersed in traditional modes of reacting, the disciples are instantly afraid when the storm arises. The sea is a place of danger. Monsters dwell there in its depth. The tradition of the desert has not prepared this nation to be a seafaring people. Fear is spontaneous.

Jesus calls people who live in fear to forego that fear and to come to faith. Even these men who are fishermen by trade are not immune to the power which culture and traditions have over them. Even the familiarity of storms on the lake evokes a mortal fear in them. Manliness, honor,

bravado, machismo: none of these is strong enough to overcome the learned reactions of a lifetime.

We are often resentful that Jesus seems to sleep when we are all in so much danger! Does he not care? How come he is not standing up in the first place to calm all those storms in our lives?

Jesus challenges the disciples in their reaction to the storm: “Why are you lacking in faith?” He challenges the learned modes of behavior that come from our culture, our habitual ways of reacting. We can learn other ways. Even if our whole social structure has trained us to believe, to think, to feel in a certain way or pattern of ways, we can change when called to do so by Jesus Christ.

If the Church community for which Mark wrote could be reassured that Jesus was still with them in their bitter sufferings, even though he seemed to be absent or asleep, then surely, we, too, can be comforted and reassured. The bark of Peter may be fragile, but it is safely in Christ’s care.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever felt comforted by the presence and power of Jesus when you were in distress? Did you call upon him urgently? Did you at times think he was not even there with you? Do you sometimes witness to others about how Jesus was with you all the time: that you just had not called upon him yet? Share some of those times of fear and distress with your group. It is good that they should hear!

2. The Church has been identified with the “Bark of Peter” from this passage in the Gospels. Talk about some of the storms that the Church is passing through at this time in its history. Missionaries are still being killed in parts of the world. Storms are raging between persons of different theological traditions. They call each other heretics! They appeal to the pope against each other. In your parish, what are the differences which keep people apart?

3. There are no women in the scene of the storm-tossed boat. What difference would there have been in the men’s reaction if women had been present? With women more prominent in ministries today in the Church, what reactions do men have? Are they more confident or less confident? Do men allow themselves to show fear?

PRAYING TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, because of your power, we are a new creation:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, because of your power, the old order has passed away:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, because of your power, all is now new:

Lord, have mercy.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Various images have been gleaned from the New Testament to describe the Church: people of God, new Israel, flock of Christ, vineyard of Christ, people of the resurrection, body of Christ, bride of Christ, bark of Peter, etc. Each of these images brings a special dimension to communicate the reality which is the Church. Of course, each image has its limits and its disadvantages.

In those ages, when emphasis was placed on the institutional aspects of the Church, the “Bark of Peter” found great favor among theologians. The bark is a neatly delineated entity: only disciples

are in it, no nonbelievers. (It doesn't matter, of course, that the disciples are all scared to death!) Jesus is there too, indeed. But, notice, the boat belongs to Peter and not to Jesus! As if the Church belongs to the pope with Jesus along as a mere passenger, albeit a most important one! There are only "clergy" in the boat, too. No women either! No wonder this image was so favored by celibate male clergy who considered themselves to be the Church in the first instance.

It is alleged that the vaulted ceilings in European church buildings reminded people of the inverted hull of a boat, or the bark of Peter covering and sheltering the assembly. How far we are willing to go to extend an image that we consider helpful!

Yet, the image proves to be useful for our understanding of our relationship with Christ. Even as a community, the Church trembles in fear of the hostile powers that surround it. What if Jesus were not there? What would be our fate if Christ were absent? Surely, we can trust that the one who commanded the wind to subside can also command the negative and evil forces to desist, to be calm. Christ abides with his Church. He keeps it safe from ultimate destruction. No peril can be too great for his power to prevail.

As long as we do not absolutize the image so as to exclude other aspects of the Church, we can find meaning and comfort in it as did the early Church.

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