

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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With the coming of evening, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him. Then it began to blow a gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. They woke him and said to him, 'Master, do you not care? We are going down!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and all was calm again. Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?' They were filled with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

(Mark 4:35-41)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- 'The other side' refers to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. This was known as pagan territory, the region of the Decapolis or the 'ten cities', which were not part of the traditional lands of Israel.
- The Sea of Galilee was (and still is) notorious for storms, which could blow up very quickly and be tempestuous.
- In Genesis 1, God brought order to the watery chaos at creation purely through his command. Here, Jesus does the same simply by verbal command.
- In Mark's Gospel, the disciples are often portrayed as missing the point and failing to recognise who Jesus is!

EXPLORING THE WORD

The 'calming of the storm', as this gospel story is known, is reported in all the Synoptic Gospels (see Matthew 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-25). The term Synoptic refers to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which have many similarities. In Mark, the text is situated in a section of the gospel that presents Jesus as the Son of God who is rejected by his own people. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had been by the lakeside teaching a huge crowd of people with a series of parables. By evening, he must have been exhausted, so he withdraws across the lake to find solitude and rest, sleeping in the stern of the boat. The lack of faith and trust that the disciples exhibit in their question comes as something of a shock to the reader and, clearly, is a shock to Jesus as well. How can they have spent so much time with him and heard him teaching and yet still have no understanding of who he is and no faith? Even after his commands to the sea and the wind, and despite their awe, they ask, 'Who can this be?' The disciples fail to perceive his true identity as the Son of God!

- Are there things that block your understandings of who Jesus is for you and for all humanity at this stage in your journey?
- Reflect on times when you have had an experience of awe or wonder at the mighty works of God.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you have a sense of 'crossing over' into a new phase of your life?
- Who can this be? Are you growing in understanding of who Jesus is?
- Share reflections on a time when you felt that circumstances might have overwhelmed or 'swamped' you. Who were the people who helped you to weather the storm? How did they provide a safe haven or stability for you?
- This week, try to provide stability or safety to someone who may be undergoing a rough patch.
- Today's entrance antiphon makes a wonderful prayer for this week:

The Lord is the strength of his people, a saving refuge for the one he has anointed.

Save your people, Lord, and bless your heritage, and govern them forever.

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

Faith is a gift from God, a supernatural virtue infused by him (CCC, §153). We use the term *faith* often in relation to our religious belief and especially in the RCIA program, which we might understand as a journey to faith. It may be worth spending some time discussing how we understand faith. We say that faith is a gift from God; it is God's grace operating to move us, with the help of the Spirit, towards a conversion of heart and mind and to an orientation towards God. God freely gives this gift, but it requires a human response: the human will and intellect must cooperate with divine grace. This faith, then, seeks understanding; it is not a blind or mindless impulse. It is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom faith is placed and to understand better what has been revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith (CCC, §158).

- Explore understandings of faith.
- Discuss the ways in which the RCIA program is structured to draw catechumens into deeper faith.
- How can that growth in faith continue to be nourished?

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Jesus is presented as sharing in the power of God to command the wind and the sea to do his will. The disciples cry out in fear and Jesus protects and brings them to safety. We too can take comfort in the image of the haven offered by faith in Jesus when the storms of our lives threaten to overwhelm us.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- Are there faith-sharing groups in your community? Is it possible to encourage catechumens to join such a group for additional support and exploration of their faith?
- Use the Scriptures, a bowl of water and a lighted candle as a focus for prayer. Remind the group that all Christians are journeying to deeper faith and understanding. The development of our faith is a lifelong process. Pray for each other as you journey to deeper faith. A suitable song could be 'Be Not Afraid' (GA 449).

Conclude with the prayer of exorcism in the RCIA at §94B.

NOTES