

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - Job 38:1, 8-11

Throughout this entire book, Job has been the victim of one disaster after another. He has lost his children and his possessions, and he has come down with leprosy. Through all this, Job has remained faithful to God.

Why do good things happen to good people? Job, helped by his friends, begins to wonder. Job has always accepted his afflictions as God's will. One of his friends presents the argument that God does not act arbitrarily, God is giving Job these afflictions because he has rejected God's warning and thus deserves extreme punishment. God answers by asking "Who and what is Job? Another god, rival to Yahweh? Does Job know the history, how it all started? Was he present at creation?" God does this with unanswerable questions; one of which is our reading for today. The first question (Job 38:4-7) is "Who made the earth?" The second question (Job 38:8-11), which is today's reading, is "Who made the sea?" The third question, (Job 38:12-15) is "Who made light?" Notice that these three questions are the reverse order of the order of creation – God is walking us back mentally to see that only He was present at creation.

38:1 Then the LORD addressed Job out of the storm and said: ⁸ And who shut within doors the sea, when it burst forth from the womb; ⁹ When I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling bands? ¹⁰ When I set limits for it and fastened the bar of its door, ¹¹ And said: Thus far shall you come but no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stilled!

No commentary.

2nd Reading - 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Saint Paul, having taught the Corinthian people about the heavenly dwelling which awaits all those who die in Christ, now proceeds to explain that this great reward which awaits us all is why he, and the truly committed Christian, has a ministry of reconciliation – a ministry which, through Jesus' own authority, restores the unity of God's family. To better understand this message, we will read verses 11 through 21.

¹¹ Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we are clearly apparent to God, and I hope we are also apparent to your consciousness. ¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you an opportunity to

boast of us, so that you may have something to say to those who boast of external appearance rather than of the heart. ¹³ For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are rational, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died.

Saint Paul is describing briefly the effects of Christ's death; a death which He underwent because of His love for mankind. By its nature, love is mutual; there must be a movement from within and without: that is, of each of the lovers toward each other. The love that Christ has for us works on us interiorly by grace.

¹⁵ He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Jesus' redeeming act was universal, it was "for all." Both the death and resurrection of Jesus were intended for our salvation, both have a part in our justification. Saint Paul uses the simile of head and body elsewhere (Colossians 1:18) but it can be seen that the solidarity between Christ and His Church also applies here. Christ, the head of the body, died for all His members; and because we are all members of His body, we have died to sin with Him. The stain of original sin and our personal sins committed up to that time are washed away through baptism and our personal sins (both mortal and venial) committed since baptism are removed through the sacrament of reconciliation. A bloody sacrifice is no longer required (Hebrews 8:1-3), the altar is forever purified and consecrated. We can now offer our own sacrifices (not sheep and goats, but our very lives). We no longer belong to ourselves but to Christ; we are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord (Romans 14:7-9). Jesus died and lived again so that we may die to sin in order to live with Him.

¹⁶ Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer.

Paul (Saul) and many others saw Jesus first only as a human – a human who could perform miracles perhaps, but still only a human. Now Saint Paul does not consider Him in that light, but rather in accordance with the revelation he has received. We all judge things by prejudices which have been formed: The Jews wanted/expected an earthly ruler and king. Doubting Saint Thomas wouldn't believe unless he could touch and feel.

¹⁷ So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

Through baptism we became a new creation, receiving revelation through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The redemptive activity of Jesus radically changes those who allow themselves to be affected by it. The old things, the Old Covenant, are no more – a new manner of being has taken place. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are for Saint Paul the dividing line between two periods of human history and indeed, all activity in this

world. Jesus' mission from the Father was to effect reconciliation between God and mankind – a division which occurred first in the garden of Eden and was compounded by the sin of the golden calf, along with many other transgressions. Through Jesus' redemptive sacrifice, heaven has again been opened and we can approach God through His ministers of reconciliation to have our sins forgiven (and forgotten).

¹⁸ And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Gospel - Mark 4:35-41

As we walk with Jesus through His public ministry during the period of Ordinary Time, we find ourselves on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has just completed His teaching of the parable of the mustard seed. What we will hear today is the first of three miraculous actions:

- 1) The stilling of the storm (Mark 4:35-40),
- 2) Exorcizing a demon (Mark 5:1-20), and
- 3) Healing the sick (Mark 5:21-43).

³⁵ On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side."

It isn't clear why Jesus now decides to return to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (the sea is eight miles wide at its widest point). To escape aggression? To find a new field for teaching? Maybe to return to His home base, Capernaum.

³⁶ Leaving the crowd,

This and the following miracles are performed for the disciples' benefit.

they took him with them in the boat just as he was.

Jesus had taught His parables from a boat (Mark 4:1-2).

And other boats were with him.

There is no mention after this of these boats or their occupants.

³⁷ A violent squall came up

Not an uncommon occurrence on the Sea of Galilee.

and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, asleep

This shows complete confidence in God [Psalm 4:8 (4:9 in the New American Bible)].

on a cushion.

More exactly, He was asleep on the helmsman's seat on the high afterdeck where Jesus would have been protected from the splash of the waves.

They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

The question appears to be less panicky than in Matthew 8:25 where it is phrased *Lord save us, we are perishing* and Luke 8:24, *Teacher, teacher, we are perishing*.

³⁹ He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm.

An implicit statement about His divine power. God alone can control the sea [Psalm 74:13-14; 89:9 (89:10 in the New American Bible)].

"When He disperses its waves, Habakkuk's words are fulfilled, where he speaks of the Lord 'scattering the waters in His passage' [Habakkuk 3:10 (in the Septuagint form)]. When at His rebuke the sea is calmed, Nahum's prophesy is fulfilled: 'He rebukes the sea and leaves it dry'" [Tertullian (between A.D. 207-212), *Against Marcion*, 4,20].

⁴⁰ Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?"

This is a strong rebuke. Did they lack faith in God or faith in Jesus? If it was lack of faith in God, they are rebuked for not following Jesus' example and sleeping through the whole thing. If it is a lack of faith in Jesus, He has just proved His power by quieting the storm, an act reserved for God.

⁴¹ They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

Since only God can control the wind and the sea, things apparently subject to evil influence, this is an implicit confession of Jesus divinity; at least to the extent that He does works customarily given to God in the Old Testament.

Comment: Recalling this episode (the calming of the storm) must have often helped the

apostles during their struggles. We are all one body with Jesus as the head – we can overcome even what appear to be insurmountable obstacles. Life is like a boat, exposed to a myriad of dangers; temptations, occasions to sin, bad counsels of men, passions of corrupt nature, etc. Never lose confidence – when temptations arise, keep your eyes on God, who alone can deliver us.

“When you have to listen to abuse, that means you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is roused, you are being tossed by the waves. So when the winds blow and the waves mount high, the boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled, your heart is taking a battering. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but the joy of revenge brings with it another kind of misfortune – shipwreck. Why this?: Because Christ is asleep in you. What do I mean? I mean you have forgotten His presence. Rouse Him, then; remember Him, let Him keep watch within you, pay heed to Him. ... A temptation arises: it is the wind. It disturbs you: it is the surging of the sea. This is the moment to awaken Christ and let Him remind you of those words: ‘Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?’” [Saint Augustine of Hippo (between A.D. 391-430), *Sermons*, 63,1-3].

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