

## **June 23 XII Sunday in Ordinary Time**

The role of God in calming the storms of life is the central theme of the readings for this Storm Sunday. The first reading tells us how the Lord speaks to Job whose life was devastated by storms of the total loss of his possessions, the deaths of his dear ones, and a whole-body disease that left him in misery. “Out of the storm,” God reminds Job that He is in control. Today’s Responsorial Psalm (Ps 107) picks up the storm theme and tells us how the Lord saves the sailors caught up in the high waves of a tempest by first “raising up a storm wind,” then “hushing the storm to a gentle breeze.” “They who sailed the sea in ships ... saw the works of the Lord and His wonders in the abyss.”

The second reading explains that Jesus died for us to make us a “new creation.” In order to receive Jesus’ gift of love, we have to respond with our loving self-surrender, living for Jesus in all situations of our lives. In other words, Paul celebrates the saving significance of the Paschal mystery – Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection. – and of our participation in it.

Today’s Gospel describes how, by a commanding word, Jesus stilled a storm on the Sea of Galilee, returned the sea to its natural order, and saved the apostles from drowning. The incident reminds us to keep Jesus in our life’s boat and to seek Jesus’ help in the storms of life.

Many of the Fathers of the Church consider this miracle story as an allegory of the early Church. The boat in the stormy lake is a symbol of the Church (Barque of Peter), facing challenges and heresies from inside and various forms of suppression and persecution from outside. The early Church faced fierce persecution in the first three centuries. A calm period followed, but that period was plagued with heresies, culminating in the Protestant Reformation Movement. The faithful in such situations wondered if Jesus had deserted the Church. But in their desperate cry for help they were able to experience the inner peace and strength of Jesus. Very often the Church and the faithful have no control over the political and social developments of our society. But, no matter what we are experiencing, we can -- with the help of Jesus -- find peace. It is the peace which only Jesus can give. And it is a peace which no person, no thing, and no situation can take away from us.

We need to remember that Jesus is always with us in the boat of our life. All of us are making a journey across the sea of time to the shore of eternity. Hence, it is natural that, occasionally, we all experience different types of violent storms in our lives:

physical storms, emotional storms, and spiritual storms. We face storms of sorrow, doubt, anxiety, worry, temptation, and passion. The storms we encounter in life are often what make us or break us: either they bring us closer to God and one another or they alienate us from God and others. And it is only Jesus who can still these storms for us. Jesus can give us real peace in the storm of sorrow. When we are totally depressed with sorrow, Jesus assures us of the glory of the life to come. At the loss of our dear ones, Jesus consoles us with the assurance of eternal life for them in the Heavenly home of God the Father where we, too, will live one day. When the storms of doubt seek to uproot the very foundations of our Faith, Jesus is there to still that storm, revealing to us his Divinity and the authority behind the words of the Holy Scripture. Jesus gives us peace in a tempest of doubt, tension and uncertainty, provided we humbly submit to Jesus' guidance. Jesus gives us peace in the storms of anxiety and worry about ourselves, about the unknown future, and about those we love. Jesus calms the storms of passion in people who have hot hearts and blazing tempers. Jesus captains the boat of our soul, not eliminating all storms but seeing to it that we do not sink, if we keep our Faith and persist in calling on God for help.

"Lord, don't you care about us?" Sure, He does! Is Christ asleep? We might often be tempted to think so when we sit by, helplessly watching the sufferings of a loved one, or in the face of personal tragedy, or in times of depression or natural disaster. In such moments we instinctively turn to God, and yet sometimes we don't find Him or He seems far away, apparently busy with other matters. But in our Gospel passage today, Jesus does calm the storm. And that's just it. Jesus does calm the storm -- not all storms forever, but each storm individually at the right moment, just when calming is needed. In AA (Alcoholics Anonymous, and in all the dependency groups based on the AA Model), there is a slogan which says "Let Go - and Let God." It is a marvelously liberating thing to let go, and to let God -- to trust God to make things come out right instead of worrying about how we are going to make this happen ourselves, to decide to act in His will instead of worrying about how to do what we want to do, trying to fix everything on our own. Faith in Jesus' abiding and sustaining presence will remove our unfounded fears and will enable believers to sail through the storms of life while being fishers of people for the sake of the rule of God.