

## 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time:

We might all agree that in daily life there are circumstances, events and realities that make us feel happy or joyful: getting a vacation, for example, or seeing old friends and family after a long absence. The enjoyment of good health, no major financial issues, peace in family or community could be included here as well. Such happiness brings contentment and overflows to those around us, by our words and deeds. However, it is often easy to forget about God at such moments at the same time.

At other times in life we may feel we are drowning in what is often called, “bad luck,” be it ill health, not enough money, fights in family or community and things like that. Even with the best of intentions, things may go wrong and be unsuccessful, seemingly no matter what one does. At such times we might feel everything is working against us and we resign it all to destiny or even attribute it to God’s punishment for past or present wrongdoing or sins. At the same time, when things go “bad,” we may actually more readily turn to God, asking for help, since nothing or no one else seems to help.

Our human makeup is so complicated that we easily pass from one set of feelings to another, from joy to sadness, security to fear, in the blink of an eye, so rapidly do our feelings change. Likewise, living in God and relying on God’s grace can become on-again, off-again, in the blink of an eye.

The Scripture lessons for this Sunday speak of God’s majesty and power in contrast to human littleness. Human weakness is contrasted to the strength of God, who can free from everything that burdens the heart. That is the point: not that God removes all that makes one sad, but God gives the capacity to face life, the good and the bad, live it to the full and find meaning, even in setbacks and disappointments.

In this Sunday’s Gospel passage, it is night and the apostles are attempting to reach the other side of what was called the “Sea of Galilee,” actually a very large lake. Christ, tired from the day’s work, sleeps in the fishing boat of his friends. Suddenly a storm arises on the lake and waves crash into the boat bringing with them such danger that the apostles wake their Lord and ask for his help. **It was their version of calling 911**, in other words, but in this case, it is the Lord himself who answers. Then and there Christ performs a miracle by calming the sea.

For our ancestors of biblical times, the sea or any large body of water was considered very mysterious, associated with chaos, the realm of evil and darkness, which only God could control. In some ways we too recognize the enormous power of the sea, its unpredictability and its power. The reading from the Book of Job this Sunday speaks of the “proud waves of the sea,” and their need to be stilled.

The lesson from the Book of Job connects with the Gospel account of Jesus calming the waves around him. Christ demonstrated power over the mysterious sea and should be recognized as possessing authority that belongs to God. That is the primary point of recounting the event: that those who hear about it will recognize in Jesus Christ, God made visible. The disciples ask among themselves after the calming of the sea: “Who can this be that the wind and sea obey

him?” The unspoken but obvious answer is that this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Lord of the chaotic forces of the sea.

Only God could calm the tumultuous sea, and if Christ is God, then he possesses such powers. **It is interesting to note, though, that Jesus performs his miracle in response to a petition.** The prayer of the disciples moves Jesus to act in the way he did, to prevent the disciple-travelers from drowning.

Awaking their Lord to alert him of impending danger, Jesus rapidly performs the miracle then asks his followers: **“Why are you so terrified? Why are you lacking in faith?”** That is the point of it all: **have faith in good times and bad; pray to God when things go well and not so well.** But how easy to forget that when we are “happy,” in the worldly sense of health and wealth, peace and prosperity or “sad,” when trials and distress beset us. Do when remember to give thanks to God and ask for help at all times?

We may lack faith and forget to put our lives under God’s watchful and loving care. No surprise that we panic, like the disciples, when water starts entering the boat. Maybe only then do we remember that we need God to reach the other shore, to rest at ease in God’s embrace.

Which reminds us that **sometimes human life is compared to a boat.** The world is the sea around us, complicated and deep, and ever-possibly devouring or drowning us. Giant animals of whatever shape loom nearby, dangers are all around, putting us into a panic and making the going rough or very difficult indeed. Faith can fail when faced with serious dangers, threats, persecutions and so on.

Our existence may not be a bed of roses, but really, whose life is? Temptations and setbacks befall us all, yet that is no reason to despair of God’s mercy. We are to live and come to the end of our life with a sure hope that even in the darkest hours we were not left alone, forever at our side was and is the Lord our God.

Today Saint Paul puts these beautiful words before us: “The love of Christ impels us,” that is, Christ’s love rules and controls our life. The Greek verb used by Saint Paul and usually translated as “impels,” literally means “to hold together, to sustain.” **Put another way, the love of Christ encircles us or keeps hold of us. Christ’s love then becomes the only motivation of our actions, our life’s inspiration.** That means we are in Christ and a new creation has begun, hence all is new. By his death Christ has opened a new path on which to walk, with access to eternal happiness in God’s Kingdom.

Let the assurance from God be our comfort and confidence always.

**Fr. Telesphore DUSABE**