



Twelfth Sunday Ordinary Time 2006

Job 38:1, 8-11; 2 Cor 5: 14-17; Mark 4: 35-41

The story from St Mark's Gospel is loaded with imagery from the First Scriptures and also from the mythology of the region. As we know the Gospels and other New Testament writings rely heavily on the First Testament, so much so that we cannot understand the Christian Scriptures without a good knowledge of portions of the First Testament.

Let us look at the story that is often called *The Storm on the Sea*.

As we look at the characters in this story we keep before us the question, "What does this story say to me as a disciple of the Christ?"

The first character is the storm. Storms evoke chaos which was the condition of the world prior to creation. The Jews understood God Creator as one who brings order to chaos. Many of us are imprinted with the belief that God creates out of nothing but this was not the biblical author's understanding. God brings an order that gives birth to creativity. In the Sumerian story God wrestles with the great sea monster to allow peace to reign. Isaiah 51 uses a fragment of the story.

Jesus sleeps. Sleeping peacefully is an image of perfect trust. To sleep peacefully in a storm is to show extraordinary trust. As Jesus sleeps the disciples care for him. This is probably a picture of the future for the group. With Jesus with them, *but not with them*, the disciples must take on the mission of Jesus.

The boat is swamped. How often we use this metaphor to describe how we feel in our taking up of the mission of Jesus. We are bogged down, overwhelmed, and at times dispirited, at this moment we cry out, "We are going to drown!"

It is a fact that we are most reminded of the presence of God when we are nearly drowned. But we needn't be ashamed, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the resourceless, the worn out, they are of kingdom."

Jesus now speaks to his other servants, the wind and the sea. In the language used by masters towards their dogs, he calls them to heel and immediately they fall at his voice. Creation is part of the household of God.

The section from Job is a reminder of God as author of creation. God speaks from the storm. God has listened to Job's endless questions and decides its time Job answered a few. There is some thing whimsical about this, God protesting about what God has to put up with. There is also an important message for us as well as for Job. How often to we question ourselves? Our motives? Our demands? Or do we as God says, "Obscure the divine plan with words of ignorance."

The image that is used is of God the mid-wife present at the birth of the sea. God asks, "Who made the play pen?" "Who provided the baby clothes?" God in love handles the unruly child setting boundaries. It is this God whom Job questions as if God was an absent father in creation. Maybe we can be presumptuous in imagining that we know more than God, even making suggestions as to how God should handle situations. No wonder Jesus prayer is, "Your will be done."

Paul in Corinthians reminds us of our loving, benevolent God when he begins Chapter five with the reminder that as we have a home here so there will always be a home for us. We collapse one tent here to have it erected by God somewhere new. This is our trust learned from Jesus. And so this secure love impels us, thrusts us forward, through the uncertainty of the deaths we endure for Jesus' sake, knowing that the path through death has been created for us. Each time we struggle through death we emerge a new creation, not judging the will of God with human standards, but accepting in faith a new order. Through Jesus we become the holiness of God.

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