

29. January 2022

Jesus calms the storm

Mk 4:35-41

With the coming of evening that same day, he said to them, '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 great 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 lost!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm. Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? Have you still no faith? They were overcome with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

"Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him." One can still feel the shock of the disciples in this question, immediately after the event they had just experienced.

Whoever knows the lake of Gennesaret, knows that the storms there are not a game.... And meanwhile this man was sleeping in the boat as if he were in a safe place! But one word from the Lord and the wind immediately calms down. Who can simply give orders to the storm? The disciples are filled with awe as they perceive this authority. *"Who can this be?"* -they ask.

For the disciples it was a continuous learning experience to live with Jesus. On the one hand, He was so close to them that the disciple John could lay his head on His chest, showing Him his love and receiving Jesus' love in great intimacy; on the other hand, again and again they heard words and witnessed acts of His that aroused wonder, awe and amazement in the disciples and all present, creating a certain distance.

This reflects what a right relationship with God should be like: both love and holy fear are part of it. It is love that enables us to deal with God with great trust and tenderness, as befits His love for us. But love must go hand in hand with reverence, lest familiarity degenerate into over-familiarity, forgetting the differences that exist between the Creator and His creature. For the infinite God who gives Himself to us as a child and allows Himself to be nailed to the Cross for our sins, is the same God to whom the elements obey, the same God who will judge the orb of the earth and before whose eyes is the life of every man.

Something of this reality dawns on the disciples as the waters subside and the storm calms.

And again Jesus surprises them... He does not merely comfort them by saying something like "but it wasn't that bad; I was here". On the contrary, He draws them to Himself, as a teacher does with his disciples, wanting to strengthen them and broaden their horizons. He says to them, "Why are you so frightened? Have you still no faith?"

Here we see what, in the end, Jesus' intention is: He wants to prepare His disciples so that they will not allow themselves to be dominated by fear in the various life situations that may come their way. Whatever may come their way, even storms at sea or other storms in life, must not lead His disciples to sink into fear.

And here the Lord's teaching also extends to us, who are His disciples at this time. Through a firm faith we learn to face the circumstances that arise in our lives hand in hand with God, and He is always there.

Faith, this virtue that we call theological, is what unites us to the Lord. Faith in Him, faith that rests on Him, gives us in every situation the certainty of being in His hands, even when we cannot perceive it with our feelings.

Faith is not simply considering something as true; it is a real manifestation of God. Let us take the example of the presence of Jesus in the communion after the priest has pronounced the consecratory words. We firmly believe that He is there, because the Word of God and the Church assure us of it. We believe it even if we cannot grasp it or prove it with our senses.

On this journey of faith, we learn to perceive God's invisible presence in every concrete situation with an inner certainty. If we apply this to all situations, we see that this is precisely what Jesus wants to teach us in today's Gospel. There is no situation without God, there is no situation that is unknown to Him, however complex it may be. God always has a way out for us, even if we are not able to recognise it immediately.

It is precisely in these circumstances that faith has to be put into practice! In a storm we feel helpless and may even have the impression that God sleeps, as Jesus did in the boat. But this is not so! He calmed the storm just in time! And not only does He perform the miracle, but He wants to tell us something: "If you had more faith you would not be so afraid". Or He could even say to us: "If you had more faith, you too would be able to command the storm".

In fact, through faith God wants to make us participants in His power. Then it will be His disciples who will work miraculous healings, cast out demons and even raise the dead in his name.

So then... who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

He is the Son of God, who not only saves us and grants us eternal life, but also calls us to cooperate in His Kingdom. His action must be actualised in the world through our faith. Our witness must prepare the way for Him into the hearts of men.

What, then, is the teaching we take away from the gospel for this day?

Like the disciples, let us also ask Him: "Lord, increase our faith" (cf. Lk 17:17). Let us activate our faith especially in situations that overwhelm us, threaten us and want to dominate us. God is also present at such moments and wants us to be aware of this so that we do not sink, but can face the situation with faith in Him.

This is what the Lord invites us to do, and we will certainly find enough occasions to exercise our acts of faith. In this way our faith will grow, so that Jesus may no longer have to reproach us for our unbelief, but can teach us even more in this faith.