

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 2021 B

In the storms of life, how do I find God? And with all the voices that speak to us, how do I recognize Jesus? St. Teresa of Avila gives several good rules for discernment in her book, *The Interior Castles*; one of them is that when God speaks to our souls, those experiences engrave themselves on our memories so vividly that even years later, that moment remains fresh and crystal-clear, as if it just happened today.

One of these moments for me came to mind with Jesus' words to the Apostles: ***Let us cross to the other side.*** I was standing on the corner in Rome, waiting for the light to change so I could cross the street and get back to the seminary. Of course it was a great opportunity to study there in Rome. But that Tuesday, it was pouring rain, about 40 degrees, I had sat with wet feet through four hours of less-than-captivating lectures, and I was just kind of miserable. Waiting for the light, I was ready to give up: "I don't think I can do this. Maybe I should just go home." I was talking to myself; but God was listening. Like a flash, the words came: "Whatever you would be fleeing is in yourself, and it will be there wherever you go. Work through it." By the time the light changed, so had my thoughts and my mood. I got over my worries that day, and I still find that if I quiet the voice inside my own head, I can hear Jesus much better.

It's hardly a story of high drama, but it illustrates those words of Jesus ... ***let us cross to the other side.*** For me, it was not just the other side of that street, but the other side of doubt, fear, weariness, discouragement. For the Apostles, it led them into the boat with Jesus, and then into the storm. To be with Christ does not mean we will be spared suffering, loss, doubt, fear. It does mean, however, that they cannot take away His presence or our hope, ***for as Job learned, God speaks out of the storm.***

It may seem at times that God is asleep, indifferent to our troubles and the problems of our world.

Whatever page we are on in the catalog of human sorrows, we understand well the panic of the Twelve in that boat: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Doesn't it matter to you that we are going to drown?" More than just the storm, they were shaken even further by a sense of betrayal – we have seen

you do miracles, we thought you could do anything. You helped those other people ... do you not care that we are perishing?

But Jesus' sleep on the cushion is not indifference; it is peaceful trust in His Father's power to save. It also foreshadows events a few months later, when He will sleep in death in the tomb and then rise to say to the powers of fear, sin, and even death: "Quiet! Be still!" *The Apostles never forgot that calm after the storm; that was even more astounding to them than the wind and the waves had been.*

Today, as we observe Father's Day, I want to thank you who are dads for your witness to a father's love, this unselfish kind of love that endures through both joy and sorrow. Like St. Joseph, you are called to nurture and protect the lives of your children, teaching the dignity and value of work, the integrity of a good character, the patience that guides and corrects. Another of the most lasting memories I have comes from childhood years when every night, my father knelt with me beside the bed to pray. It was not long – the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, and a few particular intentions for people and things on my mind. I'm sure he was tired after eight hours and more working on cars and then, after work, fixing and remodeling things at home; and I am sure he had many deeper concerns on his own mind. But night after night, my dad invested time in giving me a relationship with God. This habit of prayer could not be passed along in an instant; *only slow, steady, and patient faithfulness lets us cross to the other side.* So, fathers, as you do so many things for your children, be sure you also to teach them how to pray and know the Voice of God.

Jesus is with us, as He was in the boat with the Twelve. Today, He Himself comes to us once more in the Eucharist, and says to each one: "Come, let us cross to the other side" – the other side of fear, the other side of doubt, the other side of loss, the other side of whatever holds us back – and His voice assures us even through the storm: *"Behold, new things have come. It is I ... do not be afraid."*