

TWELTH SUNDAY O.T. YEAR B - 2021

Again, a very happy and blessed Father's Day to all the dads here today!

My Dad was a sailor in the Navy during the Korean War.

He was one of the lucky ones who did not face combat; he was the chaplain's clerk on an admiral's ship.

Somewhere in his travels he picked up a painting of a sailor standing at the wheel of a ship. Jesus is standing behind, with his hands on those of the sailor.

It's a beautiful image of our faith that, ultimately, Jesus has everything under control.

Today's Gospel presents a different image: Jesus is asleep on a cushion while the disciples' boat experiences a violent squall.

They wake Jesus up and cry out to him: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Perhaps you have felt the same way, thinking that Jesus or God must be asleep and doesn't care about your distress.

Any tragedy, any trial or tribulation, can test our faith.

In the midst of every storm in life, Jesus says to us, "Do not be afraid."

Pope Francis gave a beautiful reflection on today's Gospel during the prayer service he held in St. Peter's square in March of 2020 when the severity of the Covid pandemic became apparent and the world was under lockdown.

Pope Francis said:

"Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that, with him on board, there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God, life never dies."

Our first reading is taken from the Book of Job.

I'm sure that you recall that Job was a man blessed by God who had all of those same blessings taken away by God.

At first, Job's faith remains intact as he says: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

But over time his faith wavers and he cries out to God that question we have all struggled with at one time or another: "Why me?"

God makes the Divine Presence known to Job in a mighty storm and reminds Job that God is in control of everything.

After Job experiences the power of God up close and personal, he repents of his questioning God.

As the disciples witness the power of Jesus, they too are filled with great awe and say to one another: "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

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For Jesus, the answer to fear is faith.

It is said that 365 times in the Bible we are told: "Do not be afraid."

No matter what kind of storm we experience, Jesus doesn't just intercede for us, he is in the boat with us.

At times it might seem that he is asleep, but that does not mean that he is absent.

We have to hold onto our faith that Jesus is "God with us."

We are not alone.

And Jesus can bring calm in the face of whatever squalls and tempests we might face.

As St. Paul tells us: "Whoever is in Christ is a new creation."

Through Christ the old ways of fear give way to the new way of trust.

As you and I navigate the waters of life, let us remember that Jesus unfailingly stands behind us with his hands on the wheel.