

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 2024 B

In the storms of life, how do I find God? And with all the voices that speak to us, how do I recognize the Word of Jesus? St. Teresa of Avila said that one of the marks that it is God speaking to our souls is that 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. Here's one of mine.

I have shared this story before, but it still seems fitting in light of Jesus' words to the Apostles: ***Let us cross to the other side.*** It is now 40 years ago that I was standing on a street corner in Rome, waiting for the light to change so I could cross 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 chilly hours of less-than-captivating lectures, and I was just plain miserable. Waiting for the light, I was ready to give up: "Maybe I should just go back home." I was talking to myself; but God was listening. Like a flash, the words came in my mind: "***Whatever you would be fleeing is in yourself, and it will be there wherever you go. Stay here and work through it.***" By the time the light changed, so had my thoughts and my mood. I was still wet and cold, but no longer miserable. It remains true that if I quiet the voice inside my own head, Jesus always has something wise to say.

It's hardly a story of high drama, but it illustrates those words of Jesus ... ***let us cross to the other side.*** That rainy afternoon, it was not just the other side of the street, but the other side of doubt, fear, weariness, discouragement. The Apostles sat in the boat with Jesus, and that led them into the storm. ***To be with Jesus 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 too learned, God speaks out of the storm.***

It can seem to many today that God is asleep, if he exists at all: 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 love. 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.*

Jesus is with us, as He was in the boat with the Twelve. *Today, we'll take a few moments of quiet now to bring our fears, doubts, losses, indifference, burdens to the One who still invites us: "Come, let us cross to the other side."* We listen for His voice in hearts in the stillness, and in the storms: *"Behold, new things have come. It is I ... do not be afraid."*