

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Feb 9th 2014

We remember with awe the details of "The Miracle on the Hudson" in January of 2009 and the dramatic events that followed. Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, pilot of US Airways Flight 1549, encountered a flock of geese minutes after taking off from LaGuardia airport in New York City. The enormous plane slammed into the flock disabling both engines.

The story really begins there in that fateful moment. Now it was up to Captain Sully to react to save the passengers and his crew in the giant beast of a plane. With a steady hand he maneuvered the plane and ultimately glided on to the surface of LaGuardia's neighbor, the Hudson River. Those of us who saw the event unfold, and watched on TV, news reports of the Autobus 319A filled with passengers standing atop the wings precariously resting there as boats and ferries moved in to complete the rescue.

That event is a kind of David and Goliath story in modern dress. Possibly less physically demanding than the Sully Sullenberger saga is what St. Paul recounts to the Christian community at Corinth. Paul acknowledges that he is no match for the subtlety and the "wisdom" of the Corinthians. The people there were especially noted for their interest in the beauty and wisdom of Greek philosophy. But Paul comes to them not with honed philosophical thought, but proclaiming the wisdom of God.

What Paul has for the Corinthians is the wondrous mystery of Christ and particularly of the cruel death of Jesus on the cross. So he comes in "weakness," Jesus' weakness, as he undergoes the indignity of death by crucifixion and Paul's own personal weakness to proclaim philosophically the faith that he brings to this distinguished community of people.

The reading from Paul's letter helps us to recognize in ourselves our own "weakness" that proves to be strength because based firmly in something much higher than our own capacities and wisdom: our faith in Jesus and in God. Think of the many forces that seek to overcome or even destroy us: struggles with addictions, deep grief caused by the death of loved ones, or battles involved in our own life threatening health issues to name just a couple.

Where does the strength come from to encounter what appears to be insurmountable obstacles in our lives? How does the "Sully" and the "David" or the "Paul" appear to us in our darker struggles?

Lord, we ask you to give us YOUR strength as you faced the cruelty of the cross for us. Help us, your people, to live IN and FOR you, the very center of our lives. And we pray gratefully as you continue to love us into faith, hope and love, your personal gifts to us.

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