

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 30th 2015

Matthew's Gospel story about Jesus calming the stormy sea causes us to sit up and take notice of Jesus' divine nature. Many of his other miracles – water into wine, healings, bringing people who have died back to life – while definitely awe-inspiring are more “personal.” They involve him doing an amazing, unbelievable act to fulfill a need for someone he cares about. They do defy the natural order to be sure, but they seem somehow simpler to understand than the story we read today.

Calming a turbulent storm by rebuking the winds and sea goes to a whole new level. It's hard to get our minds around it. The wind, the water – these are raw elements of nature – they are chaotic; they don't respond to human desires. Anyone who has ever been caught in a blinding downpour, let alone with crashing waves, knows the unpredictability – and the fear – they produce.

And that's the point. Only God – the Creator, the mastermind behind the universe – could do something like this. Even his disciples, though they were inspired by him and committed to him, were “amazed,” and asked, “What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?” I imagine that after the initial gasps and mutterings, they had to have been somewhat dumbstruck as the reality of who Jesus was sunk in. He probably went back to sleep and they probably sat there in the boat on the calm water with their mouths gaping open.

I am currently reading “Jesus: A Pilgrimage” by James Martin, S. J., and had just finished a chapter in the book regarding this very scripture passage. Father Martin says this passage is one of the scriptures most commonly requested and most appreciated by people he has encountered, especially in spiritual direction.

He notes that people relate to the terror the disciples feel when they think Jesus is sleeping on the job. Most of us have felt this at times, to one degree or another. He says that when we are struggling, we tend to focus on the area of pain instead of on the Lord's great love and care for us.

Let us pray today that, reflecting on this passage, we see the overwhelming love and peace of God that allowed Jesus to sleep during a storm. May we remember God's great love for us the next time we face our own stormy sea.

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