

Daily Homily

13 Ordinal Week, Saturday

4 July 2020

Readings, selections from "Mass of Various Needs and Occasions:"

Genesis 1: 26-2:3; Matthew 8: 23-27

I have been on boats and ships a handful of times. I can understand why some people develop a phobia of the water. It is a force and a power that has a mind of its own. Out on the open ocean, there is always this feeling that one can only be in control up to a point, the rest is up to the temperament of the waters.

The temperament of the waters...

...that seems to be where we are as a nation these days. Tempers flaring, anger driving, rioting happening, unrest lurking. We have been cooped up for three months. In our country where "independence" is synonymous with "Don't tell me what to do." We have been told to stay home.

Now we reopen – sort of. We, again, are told to wear masks and to keep our distance. In addition to this, racial riots break out. Police tactics are called into question. It filters into the injustice shown to the different nationalities and races of our country. One race feels the domination of another race. Is the solution to replace that dominate race with another? Is the solution to dominate at all or to live together as a human race, created and formed, one and all, in God's image? While business have been shut down, some to never open again, and some on the brink of closing forever, in this time of reopening there has been rioting and looting. Is this the solution?

Where is the deep nobility, for intelligent resistance and change that actually secured peace not just for "me-now," but for generations to come?

People like Martin Luther King Jr. in America, like Gandhi in India, like the saints of our Catholic family ... a woman, Joan of Arc in France: a priest, Maximilian Kolbe in the Auschwitz death camp,

Elizabeth Ann Seton who started Catholic education in our country to counter act the storm of anti-Catholicism of Early America. Gianna Molla, who resisted the storm on the unborn and refused to have an abortion even though she knew her fourth pregnancy would end her own life. A Mother's sacrifice is the world's victory. Pier Giorgio Frassati, who when the Fascist party was every popular in Italy, he could not disagree more, since they were anti-religion, and anti-God.

Or even more currently, Catholic Charities who for over 100 years has been serving the need of people in Cleveland regardless of race or religion, they have been addressing the storms of poverty and the storms of those who are forgotten and left alone. All different people, different nationalities, reacting to the different storms going on subtly and not so subtly throughout our nation and in our world.

And now, another wave... statues of historical figures who have been found wanting, are defaced and destroyed all together. Including one of our own, a Catholic saint – St. Junipero Serra, a missionary of California. His statue pulled down to the ground and spray painted red. At least the media clip that I saw and the impression that the media wanted to give at the time seemed to indicate, that all the onlookers stood without emotion or reaction. They all stood to the side and looked on passively. As this misunderstood and wrongfully accused historical person is found wanting by our standards of freedom today... which includes, not wanting to know true, historical facts, which includes defacing public property, which includes the acceptance of what Cardinal Dolan of New York has noted, “the acceptance of developing historic amnesia.” Pope John Paul II, saint, said “Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.”

We are definitely in a storm, incensed by the sands of the Sahara now. What more is coming as we are tossed on the temperament of so many? With each crashing wave there is a sense of “what can we do?,” there is a sense of uncertainty, being overwhelmed, and being afraid for our present condition and the condition of our future. Where are these temperamental tides taking us?

Here we go. Let grace break in. We live in a world with God. (*Breathe a sign of relief.*)

The Gospel today is necessary. The imagery for today is perfect. Jesus is in a boat with his disciples. It is somewhat a comical scene, really, if you read it right. He fell asleep. One can only fall into a deep sleep in a moving vehicle if one is totally confident in the driver. Put me in a car with a driver I trust and I’m like a baby in car seat. I will be out cold within ten minutes. Jesus is in a boat with fisherman. He is very confident of their skill and their ability to drive the boat. This particular storm, must have been bad if these lifelong fisherman are terrified by waves that are swamping them. This must have been a storm that they had never encountered before. These professional fisherman turn to this carpenter for help. What a scene!

Jesus is calm. Jesus is cool. Jesus is collected. He even wants to have a discussion with them as he asks them, “Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?” This isn’t a time for questions, Jesus!

The Lord rebukes both the wind and the sea. He rebukes what is above and below. He rebukes what is at the surface of the storm and all the underlying intricacies of the inner, sometimes unknown and diabolical workings, of the storm.

Do you feel like you have emerged from being shut down and quarantined and are now in this boat riding the swamping waves and waters and blowing winds of some angry storm? Be with Jesus. Pray with Jesus. He is not asleep. Let him rebuke your little faith. Then let him rebuke your fears – their surface tension and the tension that goes deep down. Learn how he rebukes, take it all in, savor the words he uses, the authority and confidence with which he does it, for that power over wind and sea is also given to us. We too, as Catholics, may have to stand up for more than just statues of our saints falling someday. We too may have to learn the power of rebuking... not just what is on the surface but also what lies underneath...we too may have to learn the power of calming as well.

Do not be afraid though. Pope Saint John Paul II said that all the solutions to the problems of the world can be found in the Mass, can be found in the Eucharist. In this moment in our prayer for our nation, for ourselves, our Church, our family, for each other... be not afraid. This Eucharist is Jesus stepping into our boat. Listen to him and let him teach you the power of rebuking and the power to bring calm.