

The promise of faith is not the calming of exterior storms but of the storms which, otherwise, go on *within* us. Jesus was quite happy to sleep through the storm that assailed the boat on the sea of Galilee, but responds to the cries of his disciples in order to calm their fear and to show them, once again, that his peace is of a piece with God's; that the calm he represents, or re-presents, is of a much more fundamental nature than even life itself. Why are you worried about this life, one might say, when it's all within God's care, God's creation? It's akin to God's rebuke or remonstrance with Job: *Who pent up the sea behind closed doors....?* and so on. It's a parable then, also, about our passage through life or rather, through life *as we perceive it*, bounded by birth and death and an invitation to pass through it secure in the knowledge that *God is with us*; that, in Christ, with Christ, we are assured of a safe passage to the further shore: *let us cross over to the other side*. Christ himself then as God's assurance of our safe passage whatever storms, both internal and external, assail us on the way. We can identify with this because what day does not bring us storms of various kinds, each day having enough trouble of its own? Indeed, be wary of a day without trouble; something is not happening which should; a day without being schooled in holiness, perhaps, and our interior dictator, the one that seeks freedom only for itself, is heard to grumble, 'O come on Lord, give us a break! Let's have a day off from this dynamic of being disciplined daily by suffering.' And holidays – holy days – have their place but only in reference to Christ; they lose their meaning detached from the activity of grace – of being part of a life that is graced by God, of that journey to the other side. Perhaps, indeed, we can only get a day off when we allow Christ to remain in our boat asleep; when we have so interiorised his presence, that is, that we know his peace, as it were, without knowing it: that perception of holiness as so part and parcel of a person that they don't know it, are not self-conscious about it, are simply alive to whatever God is willing to do to them, to do *with* them, each day. This is that wonderful state of being Christ to others by being fully and totally oneself. Even reflecting where we are on that journey is, perhaps, to lose it. In other words we have to live the parable as Jesus does here.

The only personal story I can think of which may have a direct bearing on this was a storm in the Outer Hebrides which was so severe that the ferry had to put into Castlebay in Barra for shelter on the return home. We were stranded there for several hours and even allowed to go ashore in the pouring wind and the violent winds. 'We'll sound the horn when it's time to return,' the Captain said. Since they weren't counting us off or on, that wasn't all that reassuring! But we went, and the only place open was the Catholic Church. We didn't have the nerve to wait for the blast on the ship's horn so returned to the boat and spent a couple more hours in the ship's cafeteria overlooking the stern, and the captain came among us this time, reassuring people that we would leave 'once the wind got down to gale force.' (Not quite the Christ-like figure in today's gospel story!) And as we sat there staring out at the rain-soaked scenery we also just happened to notice that there were two welders at work on the rear ramp. 'Oh! So that's what it's really all about,' we thought, and were even less reassured. But like the disciples in today's gospel it was all part of my journey of knowing my need for Christ.

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