

Readings and Commentary 12 OT B

Celebration Summary by Dave Pitt: Today's readings clearly assert God's control over nature. God both commands the storm into existence and silences it in the Responsorial Psalm. And in the First Reading, God speaks out of the storm, having first created the elements themselves. It is clear, therefore, that Mark intends the disciple's question, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey," to be rhetorical for his readers. Since God controls the elements, Jesus must be God.

Far more significant than the act of stilling of the storm, however, is the initial reaction of the disciples. Because they have no faith, they are terrified that they are about to die: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" That which they fear is precisely what Paul instructs Christians to embrace: death. Paul clarifies that death is not an end in and of itself, but that it leads to far greater things. Christ died for all so that we might die to ourselves and live for him. Christ was raised so that those who live for him might also rise with him.

There are countless "storms" that might terrify us and be the cause of great despair in our lives. But if we have faith in Christ - dying to ourselves and living for him in and through his Body - then there is nothing that should cause any fear, for that which frightens us is powerless before the face of God.

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First Reading Job 38:1, 8-11

The Lord addressed **Job** out of the **storm** and said:

Who **shut** within doors the sea,
when it burst **forth** from the **womb**;

when I made the clouds its **garment**
and thick **darkness** its **swaddling** bands?
When I set **limits** for it
and **fastened** the bar of its **door**,
and **said: Thus** far shall you come but no **farther**,
and **here** shall your proud waves be **stilled!**

Commentary by Virginia Smith: As we launch the long period of Ordinary Time which will carry us to the end of November, we are given a stern reminder of who God is and who we are. The Book of Job might as easily be known as the Great Debate. It is the only book of the Bible written in this genre, and in its closing chapters particularly we have Job's questioning and God's reply.

To thoroughly grasp today's reading, Chapters 38-41 should be read in their entirety. They contain the Lord's forceful speech, only a snippet of which appears today. However, even in these short verses, it's easy to see that God plans to speak of his omniscience in terms that cannot be misconstrued. Basically, he tells Job to look around at the magnificence of creation. Where does he think all that came from? Whose hand is at work here?

It might do 21st Century Christians good to read the four chapters of this discourse. These days, science and religion seem to chafe against one another on a daily basis. The message seems to be: choose one or the other. In fact, there is no dichotomy between the two. *That* God continues to create everything in our immense universe is of far greater significance than *how* God creates. The 'how' is what we know as science, and although we have learned much since Job's day, we will never know it all.

The onset of Ordinary Time also calls for a reminder that the term simply means the numbered Sundays, not that these weeks are less important than any others.

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Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 107:23-24, 25-26, 28-29, 30-31

✠(1b) Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.

They who sailed the sea in ships,
trading on the deep waters,
these saw the works of the LORD
and his wonders in the abyss.

His command raised up a storm wind
which tossed its waves on high.
They mounted up to heaven; they sank to the depths;
their hearts melted away in their plight.

They cried to the LORD in their distress;
from their straits he rescued them,
he hushed the storm to a gentle breeze,
and the billows of the sea were stilled.

They rejoiced that they were calmed,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for his kindness
and his wondrous deeds to the children of men.

Commentary Psalm 107:23-24, 25-26, 28-29, 30-31 by

Virginia Smith: Opening the last of the five books that comprise the Hebrew Psalter, Psalm 107 is lengthy, running to 43 verses, only seven of which are used today. It is a typical hymn of praise, thanking God for the deliverance of his people. Praise psalms may be either individual or communal as this one is, but the Psalter teems with them. That may lead us to ponder exactly how much of our personal or collective prayer is devoted to praise. If we are

honest, the answer is probably not much.

Most of us were taught growing up that there are four primary types of prayer: petition, penance, praise, and thanksgiving. We tend to lean heavily on prayers of petition with pleas of remorse and expressions of gratitude receiving somewhat less attention. But praise? Why does it occur to us so seldom to simply extol God for who he is? Perhaps Catholics associate the psalms largely with their place in the liturgy where they are generally sung. It may never occur to them to include such laudatory expressions in their personal prayer. It may be a simple matter of oversight, one that homilists can help correct. From time to time, we tell those we love how much they mean to us. Shouldn't we do the same for God?

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Second Reading 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Brothers and sisters:

The **love** of Christ **impels** us,
once we have **come** to the **conviction** that **one** died for **all**;
therefore, all have died.

Christ **indeed** died for all,
so that those who **live** might no longer live for **themselves**
but for **Christ** who for **their** sake **died** and was **raised**.

Consequently, from now on we regard **no** one according to the **flesh**;

even if we once knew **Christ** according to the **flesh**,
yet **now** we know him so no **longer**.

So **whoever** is in Christ is a **new** creation:

the **old** things have passed **away**;
behold, new things have **come**.

Commentary 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 by Virginia Smith: For the next three weekends, we will be hearing excerpts from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. Because it is often difficult to deduce the writer's intent when only snippets are heard a week or more apart, it can be helpful to have some knowledge of the letter's themes. Among the topics a homilist might choose based on this letter are discipleship and the real meaning of ministry, treasure stored in earthen vessels, reconciliation, and in today's reading, God's new creation.

What will this new creation be? Surely that lies far beyond the imagination of humankind. However, Paul is not the only Scripture writer to speak of it. The mystic, John, mentions it in apocalyptic language [See Revelation 21:1].

But if that new creation remains in the mists of creation's future, there is one new creation that is very much present today, ourselves. It's true. We were made a new creation at our baptism, members of the family of God destined for that other new creation of which Paul speaks today. That new creation we hold in our own hands to shape and hone throughout the days of our earthly lives.

Perhaps Paul had something like that in mind when he wrote to his somewhat unruly congregation about 57 CE. The Corinthians, like modern Americans, represented a multiplicity of ethnic origins. Yet all of these make up the Body of Christ, a new creation indeed, one that will endure through time and eternity.

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Gospel Mark 4:35-41

On that day, as evening drew on, Jesus said to his disciples:
"Let us cross to the other side."

Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was.

And other boats were with him.

A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up.

Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion.

They woke him and said to him,

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

He woke up,

rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!"

The wind ceased and there was great calm.

Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified?"

Do you not yet have faith?"

They were filled with great awe and said to one another,

"Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

Commentary Mark 4:35-41 by Virginia Smith: Two types of fear surface in today's Gospel. One we may be more familiar with than the other. Nature's wrath prompts the disciples to call on Jesus to save them, and we can certainly relate to that kind of terror. Whether tornado or hurricane, fire or flood, we have almost all felt the panic of being powerless in the face of the forces of nature. News reports following such events often feature survivors saying they've never been so afraid in their lives.

By the end of today's Gospel, however, a completely different kind of fear comes into play. It's what Scripture often refers to as fear of the Lord. It is listed among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so it obviously cannot be a negative sentiment. Actually, this fear might be better translated as awe. It is what we find at the close of today's passage: *"They were filled with great awe..."* Awe in this sense indicates wonder, incredulity, amazement. The awesome power of God is made manifest to us in some small degree. When it does, everything else loses its power to scare us to death for the realization that God is with us is so tremendously reassuring.

The renowned scientist, Albert Einstein, once remarked that when we have lost our power to stand in awe, we are in deep trouble. Try out your capacity for wonder. Gaze at a single flower and take in the intricate detail in that one bloom out of trillions. Gaze at the night sky and try to imagine that, although we understand very little about our own galaxy, there are billions of others beyond it. God is both mini and maxi. Both inspire awe. Both speak to us of the triviality of our everyday fears.

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