

## Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ

Lectio Divina of the Twelfth Sunday B

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**Opening prayer:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Loving Father, we thank you for this evening to meditate on your life-giving words. Lord, help us to focus on what the Holy Spirit is doing in our life. We are not alone in our fight against fear; we have the Holy Spirit and the angels standing with us and in us. Help us to overcome fear in our lives and fill us with fear for You. Teach us not to worry. Remind us to not be anxious. Fill us with your grace that we bring everything that we go through to you in prayer, supplication and thanksgiving. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

### First reading: A reading from the book of 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! **(The Word of the Lord/Thanks be to God).**

**Commentary:** Why the innocent people suffer and why the all loving God is silent about it? In theology, it is known as the problem of the evil. The book of Job addresses the problem of evil (innocent people's suffering) but does not solve it. Job, a very righteous person, encounters untold pains and agonies one after the others and in fear and trembling, he asks God why it is happening in his life? God addresses Job for the first time, questioning his right to challenge God's authority and leading Job deeper and deeper into the mystery of creation. God tells Job that He is the Creator and Lord of the sea and the waters, and only He can control the wind and the sea and the other elements. *"I set limits for the sea and fastened the bar of its door."* The core message of the first reading is that God has plans and purposes which we, mortal beings cannot grasp. It also states that, although the wicked prosper and the innocent suffer for a time, God will finally set right the wrongs suffered by the innocent.

Responsorial psalm107 *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.  
**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

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.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

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.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

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.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

**Commentary:** This psalm speaks of people in distress and how God rescued them. No matter how extreme our calamity, God is able to break through to help us. He is loving and kind to those who are distressed.

**Second reading: A Reading from the Second letter of St. Paul to the 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. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him 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. **(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** St. Paul experienced rejection, hostility and hatred from the Corinthians. However, Paul did not judge them harshly because he was in Christ and showed Jesus' love for enemies in his real life when he faced hostilities. He insists the Corinthians that they should not judge each other according to the flesh. We become new people when we are in Christ and his love controls our life to be Christlike in everything we say and do.

**Gospel reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. 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?” (**The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**).

**Meditation:** The sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level and is surrounded by hills. Winds blowing across the land intensify close to the sea, often causing violent and unexpected storms. The disciples were seasoned fishermen who had spent their lives fishing on this huge lake but during this squall they panicked because the storm threatened to destroy them all and Jesus seemed unaware and unconcerned. The disciples lived with Jesus but they underestimated him. They did not see that his power applied to their own situation.

In our life, we face storms in different forms. Physical storms, spiritual storms, emotional and mental storms, financial storms, storms in family, relationship and at work places and so on. When storms come, we are terrified and become very fearful. **Basil King**, a Canadian writer and preacher, in his book “**The Conquest of Fear**”, says that “*Fear causes more misery than anything else. We are not sick all the time. We are not sinning all the time. But most people are afraid of something or somebody all the time.*” All of us, irrespective of our age, have had fear or continue to harbor fear in our life. People go through lots of fears like panic attack, clinical depression, anxiety and other inexplicable fears. More than ever before, people flock to psychologists these days for various professional help to deal with fear, creating lot of woes and worries.

Among the fears, some are true, some are imagined and some are irrational. Our imagined and irrational fears are more powerful and controlling than our true fears. At times we lose the joy of the present moment by worrying about our future. Sometimes tears roll down our cheeks for reasons we are not able to explain. At times we conclude that we cannot face the challenges of life any longer. It is at these trying and discouraging moments, we have to seek the consoling presence of Jesus and listen to his encouraging and uplifting words “why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith? Every book in the Bible speaks about fear and telling us not to fear. “Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged” (Jos 1:9) 'Do not fear, for I am with you (Is 41:10). “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (Jn 14:27).

If we reflect on fear, we can easily find that, at the root of all our fears lies a sense of losing something: Losing my happiness, my job, my house, my partner, my family, my money, my health, my wealth and my life itself. But we forget one thing. What is that? Whatever we go through is known to God already. He knows what is exactly happening in our life. When we know that he knows our battles, then we will not fear on the other hand we will be able to experience that he is on our side. We will be confident that our life is in the hands of God who is loving and compassionate.

Therefore let us not tell God that we have a big problem rather let us tell our problems that we have a big God. Prophets and Apostles in their trying moments experienced the consoling and comforting presence of our Lord. Let us remind ourselves of the promise of Jesus again and again “do not be afraid, I am with you, you are more valuable than the birds of the sky and lilies of the field. “We may not know what the future holds for us but we know for sure who holds our future”. Jesus is our future and He is our Lord and Savior who is in control of our life. He walked on the waters, calmed the roaring wind, fed thousands with just 5 loaves and 2 fish, healed so many sick people and raised the dead to life. Let us hold on to him and lead a fearless and at the same time God fearing life and he will bring peace in our troubled minds and hearts.

**Anecdote:** Jim Valvano was one of the most beloved and colorful sports personalities and a basketball coach who led his North Carolina State team to win the national championship cup in 1983. Later he became an outstanding TV analyst with his sense of humor and lovable nature. People fondly remember him not only for his success in sports but more so for the way he faced the killer disease cancer. Just a few weeks before he died, he was honored with a courage award on national television. While addressing the huge audience, he showed his fearless personality that he was not terrorized by cancer or anything else. Jim Valvano said, *“Today I fight a different battle. I have trouble walking and I have trouble standing for a long period of time. Cancer has taken away a lot of my physical abilities and continues to attack and destroy my body. But what cancer cannot touch is my mind, my heart, and my soul. I have faith in God and hope that things might get better for me. I promise you this I will never give up. I will never ever quit. And if cancer gets me, then I will just try my best to go to heaven and be the best coach they have ever seen up there.”*

We find no fear in his words because he replaced fear with faith in God. St. Paul says in **Rom 8:38-39:** *“Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Let these powerful words of St. Paul linger always in our mind.

**Concluding prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus to redeem us and to lift us up each moment from our fear and worry. Instill in us that you are with us wherever we go. May we see your light in our path to lead our way. Let your words of everlasting life be our guide. May your mighty strength sustain us. Give us the desire to experience your immense love for us in the Holy Eucharist and in our personal and communal prayer. When we feel fear, help us to cast our eyes upon our Blessed Mother for her maternal presence and strength by praying: Hail Mary/Holy Mary