

HOMILY SUNDAY 12-B
“Calming the Storm”
(Job 38:1-4, 8-11; 2 Cor 5:14-17; Mk 4:35-41)

□Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved.□

As a young priest, I mis-quoted and mixed up that statement one Sunday in Beauval. Starting out my homily, I am told I said “life was a problem to be solved, not a mystery to be lived!” Sometimes life seems like that.

Trust Jesus in the midst of your storms.

Val was losing her job due to downsizing. Her daughter was pregnant and wanting to marry the father of the child who was abusive. Her oldest son was drinking heavily because he found out his girlfriend was two-timing him. Her husband was uncommunicative and aloof. Her best friend was too busy and tired of her problems to listen to her and was avoiding her. She felt like committing suicide. Does that sound familiar to anyone? What advice would you give to Val?

Perhaps the best counsel in such a situation comes from this Sunday’s gospel – trust Jesus in the midst of your storms. Let’s look at the gospel more closely, to see what it can teach us, and Val.

First, it involves us, *the Church*. Jesus talks to the disciples, and other boats are with them. That is a symbol of the church, many boats, traveling together.

Then, Jesus invites the Church to *set out*, to *□cross over to the other side, □□□* to the Gentiles. That is a symbol of the whole world. We are invited by Jesus to move, to travel, to leave the familiar, to go beyond our narrow bounds of habit and tradition, to go into the unknown, to risk and to trust, to go where there might be storms. Jesus invites the Church to be missionary, daring, to reach out.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, at their last General Chapter, were invited by their superior general to “cross borders” referring to the pattern Jesus had of doing just that, going into gentile territory. What are the areas of life that we are invited to cross over to?

There is a sense of *urgency* to this invitation. The disciples take Jesus *just as he is* into the boat and they set out. There is no time spent delaying, getting ready, putting it off. The time is now. We, the Church, are invited to set out, as we are, with the faith and talents that we have right now.

The *storm* symbolizes the problems of life that beset us as individuals, as families, as communities, and as Church. The *wind* symbolizes the problems that beset us from without, from other people and events. The *waves of the sea* breaking into the boat, symbolize the problems that beset us from within ourselves, our families, and our Church. The challenges that surge up from within could be our own painful emotions, negative attitudes, defects of character, and addictions; the turmoil that surges up from within us and the Church, and threatens to break into our lives and upset our boats.

One of the most common problems we face, is *fear*. The disciples were terror stricken, convinced

they were drowning, shaken with fear. Fear is all around and in us: fear of the unknown; fear of rejection; fear of what other people might think; fear of being laughed at; fear of other people's anger; fear of failure; the list goes on.

That fear paralyzes us, holds us back from true freedom. The disciples (Church) turn to Jesus in their panic, and implore him to care. He wakes, rebukes the wind and calms the sea, then asks them why they were afraid; where is their faith?

The message is becoming clear. We, the Church, must turn to Jesus in the midst of our problems, trust him completely, and place ourselves in his hands. We must trust that He is present in our problems and difficulties, even when he seems to be in the stern, asleep. He doesn't prevent the storms from happening, but asks us to have faith that he is there, in the midst of our difficulties, to journey with us through them to peace and calm that only he can provide. Whether the problems come from without, or the turmoil from within, only Jesus can truly walk with us through those problems to safety.

Job, in the first reading, is a beautiful example of this kind of faith and trust in God. The devil had told God that it was easy for Job to have faith in God, because he had been so blessed. God then allowed the devil to take away those blessings, and give him all kinds of problems. God believed in Job, that his faith would not falter, and it didn't, even when Job was on the dung-heap of life and his best friends were trying to convince him that he must have sinned for all those problems to come to him.

Not once did Job doubt God, nor lose his faith in God. And in the end, God restored all his blessings a hundred fold. Again, the message is clear - trust God, trust Jesus, in the midst of our problems, and a way will be made clear for us.

Mary had a problem in her life. She had been sexually abused by her uncle when she was younger, and carried the shame, pain and anger of that secret all her life. Years after she married, she told her husband, who did not know how to respond, and said and did nothing. That only increased her pain, and she almost walked out of the marriage. One day recently, when her uncle was alone with her, he proposed that they do what they did when she was younger. She freaked out and panicked. Fortunately, she had faith, and turned to another uncle who was a priest. After hearing him speak, she felt that he would understand, and shared what had happened with him, for the first time. He understood her dilemma, got her some counseling, and set up a scenario where she could confront her uncle, with love, in the presence of other family members. Though very afraid, she did it, and it turned out well. Her uncle broke down, admitted what he had done, and agreed to go for help. She now is beginning to enjoy life and feel real freedom as well as joy in her marriage, for the first time. She felt herself becoming that "new creation" that Paul speaks of in the second reading. She experienced Jesus, walking with her through her storm, both the storm of her uncle's actions, and the waves of her inner turmoil.

Take time to reflect and apply this gospel to your life. What is your storm? How are you finding Jesus in that storm?

The Eucharist we celebrate today is our food for that journey, as we set out and cross over to the other side, through the storms of our lives, to freedom, new life, peace and joy that only Jesus can

give us, and that no one can take away.

So, remember, life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. Trust Jesus in the storms of your life, and enjoy the mystery of living with our God who loves us enough to travel with us through the storms.