

Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Introduction

Some years ago, I was on a flight to New York. When we took off, the plane encountered turbulence. I happened to be praying my Breviary and was very aware that the passenger in the next seat was watching me.

As the plane bounced around, he said, "Pardon me, Father, are you praying because you're afraid we'll crash?" "Well," I said, "the thought crossed my mind but I'm really praying to grow in love of Jesus and to become a little more like Him." I ended up hearing his confession.

In the Boat with Jesus

In today's Gospel passage Jesus is in the boat with his disciples; when a violent squall came up. Not unlike this squeamish if frequent flyer, even those experienced fisherman thought they were going to perish.

Let's stop right here to remind ourselves what really constitutes the squalls and turbulence in our lives. Usually it's not unstable air or rough seas. Sometimes it's our own sins - yesterday and today we've read about the sin of David and the destruction it wrought. Often it is our sins that unsettle us, complicate our lives, hurt others, and create untold difficulties for ourselves, our loved ones, and co-workers. As I listened to my fellow passenger's confession, I could see that the real turbulence wasn't in the air but in his heart. Sin always promises happiness but delivers upset.

Yet again the squalls of life can come from illness, accident, financial setbacks, and a whole host of other woes. Suffering in all its forms is an unescapable part of our lives - much as we try to avoid it.

Why are You Sleeping?

Whether the squalls and turbulence is due either to our sins or the inconsistencies of life, we may find ourselves crying out much like the terrified disciples - "Lord, do

you not care? I'm about to perish! Do something!"

Indeed when something really bad happens like 9/11 or an accident or an illness people sometimes say, "Where is God? Why didn't he intervene to prevent this?"

In the Gospel, Jesus woke and calmed the storm but not without rebuking the disciples for their lack of faith: "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" How easy to mumble in reply, "Of course, I do!" But we should not pass over the Lord's question too lightly - we should instead linger over the question, and make it part of an examination of conscience. We might even catalogue our anxieties and fears - sort out those that come from sin and those that come from life's unpredictability. Then let us allow the Lord to ask us: "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" Do you not have the faith to repent? Do you not have the faith to trust? Let's allow the Lord to say this to us personally. So we can cast our cares upon Him.

Blessed is She

When Mary appeared at Elizabeth's door carrying in her womb the child Jesus, Elizabeth exclaimed - "Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled." Mary's faith and trust grew brighter as her heart was pierced with the sword of sorrow and as she stood beneath the Cross. Even more than St. Paul, 'she knew in whom she trusted.'

When we are tempted amid our troubles to cry out, "Lord, where are you?" or "Do you not care?"... let us then turn to Mary. Rejoicing in her maternal love, may we have in abundance the gift of courage to face our sins and our fears in Christ and with Christ - to know and love Him in whom we put our trust.

May God bless us and keep us always in His love!