

Homily 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

'It never rains but it pours!' is often used when life overwhelms us, and we are in danger of going under as we are buffeted from every side. In such circumstances Rudyard Kipling (abridged) offers the following advice (See below for full version)*:

IF you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting
too; If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,

Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hatred.....

If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,

And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!* - (or Woman, my daughter)

Today's First Reading, from The Old Testament Book of Job, describes how God has a plan for everything, and how Job's suffering must surely have a greater purpose than to simply punish a good man. Ultimately, Job's faith prevails over his suffering. In the Bible, Job, who was an unremarkable man except for his wealth and faith, has come to represent the power of faith in God in times of great adversity.

St Mark in today's Gospel narrates the miracle of The Calming of The Storm. Miracles are signs which are visible, go beyond the known powers of nature and importantly confirm the words of Jesus to be true. Jesus for example states, 'I am The Resurrection and The Life.' and raises Lazarus from the dead to prove he is. When he casts out evil spirits he confirms himself as Lord over evil. In miracles over sickness Jesus confirms he is Lord over sickness. Finally, in miracles over nature, such as today's calming of the storm, he confirms that he is Lord over nature. It is always the case that Jesus the Son of God is in control, no matter the chaos which might appear to surround us.

The Apostles panicked during the storm and their faith and trust in Jesus dissipated. They lost their heads and doubted Jesus as Lord. They got overwhelmed by the apparent hopelessness of their situation and despaired. In all this Jesus appears to be asleep and when the Apostles, on the point of absolute despair, wake him he reprimands them, 'Why are you afraid, have you no faith?'. He then rebukes the wind and the waves and then all is calm. The Apostles are astonished and ask, 'Who is he, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

Our lives can be fraught with danger, full of uncertainty and fear. We can despair at the hopelessness of certain situations over which we have no control. We can feel paralysed by the chaos surrounding us. Like the Apostles we may even lose faith and doubt Jesus. St Paul in today's Reading from 2 Corinthians reminds us that the only thing which should overwhelm us is, 'The love of Christ'. In other words, despite our pain and suffering we must believe that God loves us unconditionally and He is in control. If we have faith, He will help us through even life's most challenging circumstances. In the words of the homily a couple of weeks ago - God will never ever let us down

***IF - Rudyard Kipling**

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Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts
your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone, And
so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
' Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!