

Homily of Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

Job 38:1, 8-11; Psalm 107:23-26, 28-31; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Mark 4:35-41

It is a common human behavior, especially for us believers, to ask God questions in our grieving. Often, we hear some people say, "You should not question God." Questioning God while grieving is a form of prayer in as much as we entrust every moment of the situation into God's hand. If we question God with faith, he will surely respond to us, no matter how difficult the situation is.

Many Psalms questioned God. For example, "How long, Lord? Will you utterly forget me? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I carry sorrow in my soul, grief in my heart day after day? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (Psalm 13:2-3).

Jesus questioned God while he was hanging on the cross, "And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?"* which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:35).

We read in the first reading Job's lamentation and questions to God. Job cursed the day he was born and questioned, "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Why did knees receive me, or breasts nurse me? ... Or why was I not buried away like a stillborn child, like babies that have never seen the light?" (Job 3:1-16). Also, in chapter 30:20-21, Job lamented to God, "I cry to you, but you do not answer me; I stand, but you take no notice. You have turned into my tormentor, and with your strong hand you attack me. You raise me up and drive me before the wind; I am tossed about by the tempest."

The first reading is God's response to Job. The reading says that "the Lord addressed Job out of the storm ..." That is, God responded to Job in Job's storm and assured Job that he is the Lord over his storm. God assured Job that he was in control despite his storm.

The gospel is Jesus' disciples experience of a storm. "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?'" (Mark 4:37-40).

Storms in our life distress us, as in the case of Job; or terrify us, as in the case of the disciples of Jesus. Sometimes, we do feel that God is silent as in the case of Job; or that Jesus is 'asleep' as in the case of the disciples. The readings teach us that God is neither silent nor asleep. He is in control. The wind and the sea obey him, as the disciples later testified.

Today's Psalm also testifies about the sailors "who sailed the sea in ships and traded on the deep waters, saw the works of the Lord and his wonders in the abyss. ... 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" (Psalm 107:13-29).

We are like Job. We are like the disciples. We are like the sailors. We are distressed in our various storms. We are terrified by the violent waves breaking over our boat. Our hearts melt away. We lament. We ask questions and search for answers. Sometimes, we think that God is punishing us. Sometimes, we think that God has abandoned us; that he is 'sleeping.' We do not understand what is happening to us. We ask, "Why me?" "What have I done wrong?" "What is my sin?"

The first reading tells us that God addressed Job from "out of the storm." He does the same to us. He addresses us out of our storm; but often we do not listen. Rather, our attention is on the waves of the storm; a clear sign of lack of faith. With strong faith, let us turn our attention to God, and cry to him as the sailors did. He stilled the sea for them. May he do the same for us. With strong faith, let us turn our attention to Jesus as the disciples did. He rebuked the wind and there was great calm. May he do the same for us.

St. Paul encourages us in the second reading (2 Corinthians 5:14-17) that we should not be ruled by distress, or fear, or doubt, but that we be impelled the love of Christ. By that, old life passes away, and we become new creatures. May these words be fulfilled in our life. Amen.

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