

Homily: June 20, 2021

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

You may remember that last Sunday Jesus asked, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?” He used the image of tiny mustard seeds to reveal the magnificent growing power of God’s kingdom, a tiny seed becoming a huge tree and place for all creatures to have their nest and rest. Perhaps for you fathers, there was a similar experience as your family grew to be a nest and rest for many.

Today Jesus will continue his lessons about the kingdom of God—the new world of God. With all that’s going on in our world and in our church, do we trust that a new world is really in the making? We sometimes wonder, doubt, and don’t pay attention to this new world God is trying to transform. So, we acknowledge and call for God’s compassion and mercy.

Today we hear that Jesus continued teaching his disciples what the kingdom of God is all about in the midst of a storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples learn that a calm, peaceful, even sleeping Jesus reveals a key aspect of God’s kingdom—the world of God where life’s storms calm down when they believe in God’s presence, especially in the midst of a storm.

The disciples and we today can be confused or also prompted into deep question and reflection by the image of Jesus sleeping through a storm. His disciples reacted out of fear and began blaming him for not caring enough about their safety. What were they expecting from him? Whatever it was, Jesus didn’t end up saying – “Thank God you relied on me and woke me up to help you!” Rather Jesus admonished them for having little faith. But what did Jesus mean exactly by saying, “Do you not yet have faith?”

Was Jesus trying to tell them that they didn’t trust in their own seafaring skills which God had already given them through umpteen experiences on the sea of Galilee? Was Jesus trying to tell them that rather than blaming him for caring too little, they were to trust one another and trust in the power of their own God-given capabilities for collaboration in keeping the boat afloat? Jesus may have been asking them, “Did you forget that I am Emmanuel, God with you?”

This story does want to remind us that somehow or another God will get us through our life’s storms and our church’s storms, too—beyond our being able to figure it out at the moment. I am reminded of Pope John XXIII, who opened

Vatican II, subsequently creating quite a creative and challenging storm in the Roman Catholic Church. This pope of good humor revealed his night prayer. "Well Lord, it's your Church, you take care of it; I'm going to sleep." This prayer of deep trust in the Lord allowed him to sleep despite the ecclesial storms he faced.

My niece gave birth to a handicapped boy a year and a half ago. He most likely will never walk. He is also missing many ribs thus diminishing his breathing power. So he has been wearing an oxygen mask since birth. In fact, now, this smiley little great-nephew of mine has a semi-permanent tracheal tube. Yet, his mother, my niece, told me, "I know this is not what we hoped for, but I believe that God has something good planned for us through this situation."

I think her and her husband's strong faith also helps them lend support to one another and their three-year-old daughter during this particular storm of their life, a storm which has calmed considerably. They really have crossed over to the other side of the sea, to shores of ever deepened faith, which prepares them for any other storms they may still have to face.

As Paul said, being in Christ is being a new creation, old things have passed away and new things have come. Old ideas of God and the kingdom of God are replaced by new thoughts and deeper faith in God's world. We can "crossover" to becoming new persons filled with deeper trust that God is present, even when we blame God for not caring.

What will you and I answer when Jesus asks us, "Do you not yet have faith?"