

HOMILY ~ JUNE 19/20, 2021 12th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

For Father's Day a few years back, two children decided to do something unique for their father. They pooled all their money and bought a beautiful religious horse for him. It was religious because when anyone said, "**Amen**," the horse would stop and stand still. If it heard, "**Praise the Lord**," it would run like the wind! It was well trained to those two phrases, **Amen and Praise the Lord**.

The children gave the horse to their dad and explained the meaning of Amen and Praise the Lord. Amen means it will stop and stand still, and Praise the Lord means it will run like the wind! Their father thanked them and jumped on the horse, and the horse began to run fast! At one point, their father forgot what to say! The horse was picking up speed and ventured onto a hill which led to a cliff. The father was getting nervous but, thank God, he remembered what to say. He shouted out, "**Amen**," and the horse stopped on the edge of the cliff. The father was so happy that the horse stopped, that he thanked God saying, "**Praise the Lord!**"

This is Father's Day weekend, a weekend where we celebrate the men who calm us, encourage us and challenge us, much like Jesus does with his disciples.

Today Jesus and his disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee. They are moving from the Jewish side to the Gentile side; the side where they are at home to the side where they are strangers, the side where life is familiar to the side where it is new, different and unfamiliar. We may have never crossed the Sea of Galilee, but we have all been in that boat.

This is not just a story about the weather and a boat trip. It is a story about life. It is a story about faith. It is a story about fear. Wherever you find one of those, you will find all three. They cannot be separated.

Sometimes the sea of life is rough. The wind is strong. The waves are high. The boat is taking on water and sinking. We all know what that is like, maybe even more so over this past year. Each of us could tell a storm story. Some of our stories will begin with a phone call, a doctor's visit or news we did not want to hear. Some of them will start with the choices we have made, our mistakes and our sins. Other stories will tell about the difficulty of relationships, hopes and plans that fell apart or the struggle to grow up and find our way. Some storms seem to arise out of nowhere and take us by surprise. Other storms build and brew as we watch.

Storms happen. Storms of loss and sorrow. Storms of suffering. Storms of confusion. Storms of failure. Storms of loneliness. Storms of disappointment and regret. Storms of depression. Storms of uncertainty and second guessing. Storms of thoughts and voices.

Regardless of when or how they arise, storms are about changing conditions. Life is overwhelming and out of control. Things do not go our way. Circumstances seem too much for us to handle. Order gives way to chaos. We are sinking. The water is deep, and the new shore is a distant horizon.

The disciples are quick to make the storm about Jesus. "*Do you not care that we are perishing?*" We've probably all echoed their words in the storms of our lives. "*Do something. Fix it. Make it better.*" During the storm, Jesus seems absent, passive, uncaring. *How*

can he sleep at a time like this? Sleeping Jesus is not what they or we want.

Sleeping Jesus, however, is in the same boat and the same storm as the disciples. He is surrounded by the same water as the disciples, blown by the same wind, beaten by the same waves. His response, however, is different. While the disciples fret and worry, Jesus sleeps. The disciples want busyness and activity. Jesus sleeps in peace and stillness. His sleep reveals that the greater storm and the real threat is not the wind, waves, and water around us – the circumstances in which we find ourselves – but within us. The real storm, the more threatening storm, is always the one that churns and rages within us.

That interior storm is the one that blows us off course, beats against our faith and threatens to drown us. Fear, vulnerability and powerlessness blow within us. The sense of abandonment, the unknown, judgment and criticism of ourselves and others are the waves that pound us. Too often anger, isolation, cynicism or denial become our shelter from the storm.

“Quiet! Be still!” Jesus speaks to the wind and the sea. Jesus is not changing the weather as much as inviting the disciples to change. He is speaking to the wind and the waves within them. The disciples have been pointing to what is going on outside them. Jesus now points to what is going on inside them. **“Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?”**

Jesus’ words are more about us than the circumstances of our lives, the storms we meet. Storms happen. Faith, more faith, better faith, stronger faith, the right kind of faith do not eliminate the storms of our lives. Faith does not change the storm. It changes us. Faith does not take us around the storm but through the storm. Faith allows us to see and know that Jesus is there with us. Faith is what allows us to be still, to be peaceful, in the midst of the storm. It means we do not have to interiorize the storm.

The Spirit of God blows through and within us more mightily than the winds of any storm. The power of God is stronger than any wave that beats against us. The love of God is deeper than any water that threatens to drown us. In every storm Jesus is present and his response is always the same, **“Quiet! Be still!”**

In every storm, there are choices to be made. Will we interiorize the storm or Jesus’ peace? Do we put our faith in the power of the storm or in the power of God in Christ?

Happy Father’s Day!

Peace,
Deacon Don