

# *Gratitude Foundation*

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*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

## **The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year B**

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*“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”*

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Reading I

### Job 38:1, 8-11

The Lord addressed Job out of the storm and said:

Who shut within doors the sea,  
when it burst forth from the womb;  
when I made the clouds its garment  
and thick darkness its swaddling bands?  
When I set limits for it  
and fastened the bar of its door,  
and said: Thus far shall you come but no farther,  
and here shall your proud waves be stilled!

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 107:23-24, 25-26, 28-29, 30-31

**R. (1b) Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

They who sailed the sea in ships,  
trading on the deep waters,  
These saw the works of the LORD  
and his wonders in the abyss.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

His command raised up a storm wind  
which tossed its waves on high.  
They mounted up to heaven; they sank to the depths;  
their hearts melted away in their plight.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

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.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

They rejoiced that they were calmed,  
and he brought them to their desired haven.  
Let them give thanks to the LORD for his kindness  
and his wondrous deeds to the children of men.

**R. Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.**

## Reading II

### 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Brothers and sisters:  
The love of Christ impels us,  
once we have come to the conviction that one died for all;  
therefore, all have died.  
He indeed died for all,  
so that those who live might no longer live for themselves  
but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh;  
even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh,  
yet now we know him so no longer.  
So whoever is in Christ is a new creation:  
the old things have passed away;  
behold, new things have come.

## Alleluia

### Luke 7:16

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**  
A great prophet has risen in our midst  
God has visited his people.  
**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

## Gospel

### Mark 4:35-41

On that day, as evening drew on, Jesus said to his disciples:  
“Let us cross to the other side.”  
Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was.  
And other boats were with him.  
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?”  
They were filled with great awe and said to one another,  
“Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?”

# Exegesis

## Job 38:1, 8-11

In the three-year lectionary cycle of Sunday Mass readings this is the only passage selected from the *Book of Job*. Yet, the *Book of Job* is certainly one of the most well known of all OT books. Everyone knows of the plight of Job. Job is not literally in a storm, he is experiencing a particularly chaotic period in his life. It is a divine comedy of epic exaggeration.

Job was a good and God-fearing man of impeccable moral character who was rich in the eyes of the world and has now lost everything. He was a devout in his religion and felt that he knew a lot about God. A once brave man, in his loss, is now left craven in fear. He is angry with God and demands answers. His “friends” remind him that he must have deeply offended God in some way to be in the middle of such a “storm.”

Job gets his wish, God responds. God does not answer his questions, however. God takes Job on a whirlwind tour of creation. God takes him back to the beginning. In the reverse order of the creation story in Genesis God takes him back to the moment that God first spoke light into existence and separated day from night. He takes him back to the primordial chaos of the waters above which the mighty Spirit (Ruah) of God hovered and tamed into order. For three chapters this tour of creation and all its majesty and mystery are unveiled.

Job is left in awe, with his hand over his mouth (vs. 40:4). He is transformed from craven fear to a fear of awe and trembling before the majesty and splendor of God. God transports Job from the belly of the “storm” to a place above and beyond the “storm.” God does not answer his question but takes him to a place beyond the question. Job responds again to God at the beginning of Chapter 42: “I have dealt with things I that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know. I had heard of You by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you.”

The common answer to the story of Job is that there is no answer to why bad things happen to good people. It is a mystery that must be relegated to faith and trust in a loving God. But isn't God showing Job and us a world beyond the question? Why is God giving us this tour into the wonder and mystery of creation? God wants us to see the world above and beyond the storm. God wants us to come to know a peace that is beyond the chaos. It is not freedom from the storm it is peace amid and beyond the storm; and so, God calms the storm!

## Psalm 107:23-24, 25-26, 28-29, 30-31

Psalm 107 is entitled *God the Savior of Those in Distress*. In this life I think that would be all of humanity. Psalm 107 begins *Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, whose love endures forever*. The psalm would seem to be post exilic as it expresses gratitude to God both for deliverance from the dangers of the desert (v. 4) and from the dangers of the exile (v. 10). Both “storms” are likened to a storm at sea in our pericope. The chaotic sea in Gen. 1:2-3 and the lifeless desert in Gen. 2:4-7 are both overcome by Yahweh. Since it is God's power that subdues the stormy sea, this motif in the sea calming miracles of Jesus (Mark 4:35-41) is an expression of the divine authority of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The joy of being saved from the storms of life is celebrated throughout the Psalm 107. It is a rejoicing in the steadfast enduring love. The psalm is a resounding call for gratitude: e.g., “Let them thank the Lord for such kindness” (v. 8); and “Let them offer a sacrifice of thanks, declare His works with shouts of joy” (v. 22).

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1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, P.H., Englewood, N.J., page 545.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Paul repeatedly points to the Cross of Jesus, e.g. “But may I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Gal. 6:14). Pope Benedict XVI in his first letter to the world, *Deus Caritas Est, (God is Love)*, points to the Cross of Christ and says, “This is where the definition of authentic, agape, love must begin.” Christ died once for all. He is Love incarnate. He is the source of all love and of all that is. By our baptism we are incorporated into Christ, into self-giving love. At the Last Supper Jesus talked about and promised His indwelling presence. That indwelling presence is made possible by His dying and rising, His Paschal Mystery.

We are invited into Christ in and through His indwelling presence. As earthen vessels and temples of the Holy Spirit we are called to incarnate self-giving love. We are called to be channels of God’s love into our environments, into our world. We are also challenged to be incorporated into His Body, His Church. It is through the divine presence that we become a new creation, flesh transformed and elevated by grace.

### Mark 4:35-41

Our Gospel passage today begins a transition from a series of parables to a sequence of miracles or mighty deeds of Jesus. The deeds begin with the calming of the sea, and progress to the casting out of demons, healing the sick and raising the dead to life. The movement begins with Jesus as He was, in the boat teaching via the use of parables. Already in the boat He invited them to cross to the other side. They are crossing from the west side of the Sea of Galilee to east side. They are moving from Jewish to Gentile territory.

The Sea of Galilee was a relatively shallow lake and was thus susceptible to become rough very quickly. *A violent squall, (lailaps megale anemou)* in Greek suggests a sudden tornado-style whirlwind descending from above. *The waves began to break over the boat:* Though part of a realistic description, the “waves” (*kymata*) provide the verbal link with the OT psalms of God’s power over the sea (Pss 42:7-8; 65:7-8; 89:8-9; 107:23-32)<sup>2</sup> In the creation story the mighty wind (*Ruah*), i.e. the Holy Spirit, hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2). The inference is that the mighty power of God transformed the primordial chaos into peace and calm.

Jesus is asleep as the storm rages. Untroubled sleep is a sign of trust in the power and protection of God (Prov 3:32-34; Pss 3:5; 4:8; Job 11:18-19).<sup>3</sup>

The cry of the disciples, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” is a deep urgent call for help. The cry of the disciples is similar to that of the crew in Jonah 1:14: “Lord, do not let us perish.” A possible point of contact between Jonah and Mark is the belief that the God of Israel has the power to save from the raging sea.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus rebukes the wind and commands that it be quiet and still. He obviously reveals His divine power over the sea. It also echoes His commands to the evils spirits as exorcised in Chapter 1, verse 25. The Jewish people believed that the sea, the dark abyss, was inhabited by demonic forces.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Mark 4:35-41

There is a movement in this Gospel passage from great chaos to great calm. There is a movement from great storm, to great fear (craven timid fear), to great calm, to great fear (awe and amazement). Like Job in our first reading, the apostles come out of the storm with an experience of a great theophany that is transformative. Job exclaims, “I had heard of You by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen You.” (Job 42:5) The apostles had just witnessed the words of Jesus in a series of parables and even had those parables explained in private, but they were merely words that they heard. Now they have experienced the power of God in all its majesty. Like Job, their craven fear is transformed into fear and awe before God. Such experiences lead to faith. Such faith gives us peace amid the storms of life.

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2. John R. Donahue, S.J., Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., Sacra Pagina Series, The Gospel of Mark, L.P. Collegeville, MN., page 158.

3. Ibid., page 159.

4. Ibid., page 159.

## Reflection

In the Gospel for this weekend the disciples find themselves in a terrible storm. They are crossing to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is with them in the boat but is sleeping through the raging storm. In a panic the disciples wake Him, and they ask, “Master, don’t you care that we are perishing?” The translation of the question might be, “Don’t you love us?” Jesus answers with a question of His own “Don’t you yet have faith?” By now, after all the teachings that they have heard, and all the miracles that they have witnessed, all the love that they have experienced one would think that they would feel safe in His presence. Yet, in their great fear, amid the storm, they question, and they cry out to the Lord.

In our first reading Job is calling out to God as well. He is not at sea but is in the middle of a storm none the less. His storm is precisely what the disciples’ storm represents. It is the storm of life. From the depths of despair and chaos Job calls out to God. In his fear and anger Job calls out to God. He seems to be seeking answers more than anything. In fact, he is demanding answers from God. Like Jesus in the boat responding to His disciples, God answers Job with a question and even a series of questions. God asks Job, “Where were you when I hovered over the waters and transformed the primordial chaos into the beauty of creation? Where you there when I set the boundaries of the sea?” Amid their dialogue God takes Job to the other side. God takes Job beyond the question. God transports Job out of the storm to the calm beyond the storm. From the other side Job can see as God sees and to know as God knows. Like the disciples a new fear overtakes Job. He is filled with awe at the power of God. Job is taken beyond the question, in fact, beyond all questions.

When praying with the scripture this week the image of the “storm” and chaos of the Crucifixion kept entering my thoughts. Perhaps at its deepest level the wood of the boat represents the Cross. To cross to the other side Jesus had to endure the storm of the Cross. The peace and calm that follows the storm may represent the stillness of that first Easter dawn when the tomb was empty. That evening Jesus breathed His Peace upon the apostles and their fear was transformed into faith.

Or maybe the boat in today’s Gospel represents the Church, the bark of St. Peter. Jesus is with us in the boat. The Risen Lord is with us as we journey through the storms of life. As we journey through the waters of this life to the other side we are called to have faith. With Jesus in the boat with us we have nothing to fear. He is love and love drives out all fear. The Cross and the Resurrection transport us beyond the questions of life. God’s love is stronger than the storm. God’s love is stronger than death. He is with us in the boat. Stay in the boat and together we will reach the other side, Heaven!

Yours in Jesus and Mother Mary,



## Personal Witness

During most of my years of priesthood I have been blessed to be the pastor of a parish with a Catholic elementary school. One of my great joys was celebrating the school Mass with the children at least weekly. At every Mass I would assure the children that God loved them, and that God did not want a world without them. Once during one of my homilies I asked a rhetorical question, “how often have I told you that God loves you.” The little girl that had a knack for answering without being called on blurted out, “about a bajillion times.”

A mother of one of our school families was killed in a tragic domestic accident. That evening, I was sitting with the father, two young children, ages 6 and 7, and the grandparents. There were no words to comfort the shock and grief that we all felt. The seven-year-old child looked at me in the silence and asked, “Father, if God does not want a world without my mother, how come she is gone, and I will never see her again?” I will never forget the look on that child’s face. I had no answer.

That night I was not able to sleep. I was holding the bible in my hand and was moved to read the *Book of Job*. Like Job, I was angry with God and was searching for answers. Job demands a meeting with God and God grants his wish. In the end Job stands in awe and says, “I have dealt with things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know.” (Job 42:3) The standard answer to the question, why do bad things happen to good people, is that there is no answer in this life and that we are asked to have faith and trust in God. That night that answer was not good enough for me, I was demanding more from God.

About 3 a.m. I was on my third or fourth reading of the *Book of Job*. I was in that section that is entitled *The Lord’s Speech*, which covers four chapters, i.e. 38-41. God responds to Job and takes him on a whirlwind tour of creation. I fell asleep wondering why.

That morning, I had a dream. God said, “It is true, I do not want a world without Mary (deceased mom), but the world is bigger than the world that you can see right now.” When I awoke, I realized that like Job, God had taken me to a place beyond my questions, beyond my grief. To God all are alive. He is God of the living and the dead.

Jesus came to show us a world beyond physical sight and the physical senses. In our Gospel today the apostles are journeying with Jesus through the storms of this life to the other side, the world beyond. I now see the Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery, and the totality of Sacred Scripture as the revelation of a world on the other side. God wants us to know that His world, the world He desires to share with us is bigger than the world in which we now live. He wants to journey with us. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Invite Him into your boat!

