

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE B

Open with a prayer: Loving and powerful God, you are the Rock in the storms of our lives. Your love is always with us, no matter what we face. Deepen our faith in your presence and love. Turn us toward you when we attempt to rely on ourselves. Open our hearts to the Word you want us to hear today. This we pray through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Sharing life: What are you most and least grateful for this week?

Facilitator reads focus statement: The first and third readings speak of God's power at work in creation, and especially in Jesus and our call to place our trust in him. In the second reading, Paul speaks of a New Creation, gained for us by Christ's death and resurrection.

Now read the readings, pausing briefly after each one. Consider reading the commentary after each reading, if you do not already do so.

FIRST READING: Job 38:1, 8-11

The book of Job deals with the persistent question of why bad things happen to good people. The book of Job does not answer the question, but it does assure us that God is present to us in the storms of life and that he is more powerful than the greatest of storms. Today's verses are intended to reassure Job that no matter how severe or unbearable his suffering might be, God is present to him and is more powerful than the evils that might beset him. This should lead Job to place his trust in God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 107

This is a thanksgiving psalm reflecting the prayer of people who have been preserved from disaster by God's saving power.

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

In these verses, Paul in part is responding to those who are accusing him of being a crazy fanatic. Paul says it is the overwhelming sense of God's love, which impels and drives him. This love of Christ leads him to reflect on how that love was played out in the death that Jesus died for us. Then Paul reflects on the relationship between Christ's death and the way in which he has died to self by being joined to Christ in a "new creation." In that new creation, we live "for him" whom we now know, not according to the flesh, but in an entirely new way.

GOSPEL: Mark 4:35-41

In this story, Jesus exercises his power in such a way that puts him on a par with God, for only God has power over the wind and the seas. This nature miracle is performed like an exorcism. Jesus "rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still." Unfortunately, the disciples do not yet have sufficient faith to see God at work in Jesus. This story was only intended to point out the mighty power of God at work in Jesus, but it was also intended to bring comfort and courage to a young church, frightened by persecution. Mark is saying to his fledgling church and to us: although there may be times in the life of the church (often imaged as a boat) when she will be threatened by the forces of evil and confusion, no force, however frightening, will prove to be a match for the power and presence of God at work in Jesus. On our part we are called to cultivate unwavering faith in our powerful and caring Savior.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

1. What verse spoke to you and why?
2. When we reflect on the destructive power at work in the Tsunami and Katrina, did it seem that God was not in control of his creation? In the face of such destruction, what helps you to continue to believe God is in control of his creation?

3. The love of God was the motivating force behind Paul's strong evangelistic spirit. Do you wonder whether, if we had a much deeper sense of God's love, we too would be much more driven to share the Good News with others?

4. How has your faith helped you to deal with the "squalls" of life?

5. What message does today's gospel say to our church at this time in her history?

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Name one way you can act on today's readings. Suggestion: Be available to be a Jesus presence to people whose faith is being tested at this time.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Pray for all whose faith is being tested at this time.©