

# THE EMMAUS SERIES

## 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year B

Job: 38:1, 8-11

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Mark: 4:35-41

### ***Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?***

Today's reading from Mark's gospel - telling how Jesus calmed one of the storms that are common on the Sea of Galilee - is one of three accounts of miraculous actions of Jesus which Mark brings together as he concludes his account of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. The impact of this dramatic narrative would have been heightened for the first Christians, as they recalled the Saviour's triumph over the storm and confusion of his passion and death: the very centre of their new-found faith. Listening to this story, they would have found a new joy in the triumph of the Paschal Mystery. For those of Mark's community who were from a Jewish background, the Lord's mastery over the violence of the sea would have called to mind an Old Testament theme echoed in the first reading from the Book of Job.

For ancient cosmologies of the Middle East, the sea was mysterious and threatening – beneath the visible waters, they imagined a vast abyss upon which the flat earth rested precariously – as we hear in the biblical account of creation, as God's almighty power over the sea establishes the 'dry land of earth' (Gen 1:9). This outlook is recalled in the magnificent poetry of the Book of Job – the Lord responds to Job's complaints by appealing to the mysterious sovereignty of divine action evident in creation.

In this narrative, Jesus displays the mastery which belongs to the Creator; but the disciples in the boat with him are still far from the 'faith' that will be theirs when they recognize the full implications of his actions. In a typically Marcan detail – evidencing an immediacy that may well reflect Peter's telling of the story of Jesus – they abruptly confront Jesus: 'Master, do you not care? We are going down!' And when Jesus had calmed the storm, they were confronted by the sub-text we have already noted in Mark's gospel: 'WHO CAN THIS BE?'

It is possible, as we have noted, that Mark's community belonged to the infant Church of Rome, who found themselves in the storm unleashed by Nero's persecution - that was to lead to the martyrdom of Peter. They have found the 'faith' to which Jesus had invited the disciples in the boat - a trusting awareness of God's almighty presence in the ordeal that they were facing. This gospel speaks to the Church in every age – its relevance to our stormy times needs no elaboration.

As so often happens, the reading from Paul accords well with the gospel reading. Paul recalls the time when, like the disciples in the boat, he had not found faith in Christ, but judged the Saviour 'by the standards of the flesh'. But now, aware of the 'new creation' brought forth in the Paschal Mystery, he can face even the martyrdom that he is to share with Peter.

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