

### “All Hands on Deck”

Can you think of a gospel lesson more apropos for the week we have had that today's? We have had storm after storm this week. I suppose most of us have been safely indoors when they happened, and not in a boat on an unruly sea. But even then the storms can be quite intimidating. I was thinking about a dog that I used to take care of. His name of all things was Trout. He loved going for walks and was curious about humans and other dogs but never fearful. He was a bit nuts in that he would eat anything and I mean anything. He ate rocks, trash, garbage, anything that was on a counter because he presumed it was food; and once an entire bunches of bananas skins and all. His strangest habit was his reaction to thunderstorms. The moment he sensed one beginning he would run into the owner's living room and put his head, and only his head, under the sofa. At that point I could have put a perfectly cooked filet mignon on the floor next to him and he would not bring his head out from under the sofa to eat it. His fear of storms was too great.

I expect we all get undone by the storms of life meteorological, emotional, political, or familial. Sometimes we hide like Trout. At other times we get caught up in the frenzy of emotion and in our attempts to try to quell the storm we actually add to the tempest. I think of what we call helicopter parents who perceive the slightest setback for their child as a crisis and mobilize for the slightest thing as if it were war. Other times we might try to ignore the storm and hope in time it will pass us by. I think of those that decide they will ride out a hurricane and end up a casualty. Then there are those who seem to be immune to concern of impending doom.

What is interesting and perhaps surprising is that at least some of the disciples were experienced fisherman. Artists often portray the situation with Jesus asleep and all standing around him. Didn't the boat have oars? Who was manning them? Why are the disciples turning to their teacher who was a carpenter and not a fisherman or sailor?

I don't think that the disciples felt Jesus would or could do anything. They were all fearful and could not imagine how Jesus could be fast asleep. Jesus is a bit like a parent who has been awakened from a nap, because a child has a boo-boo. The child turns to the parent believing she can make it better. The disciples turn to Jesus because perhaps he has the answer. Surprisingly for the disciples Jesus does have the answer to their dilemma. I am sure it is not at all what they expected.

As afraid as they were about the storm, they are now awestruck, or perhaps a better term would be freaked out, by Jesus' action and the result. They know Jesus was a compelling, charismatic teacher. They had witnessed several miraculous healings, but now they see him calm nature. That was unheard of in their experience. They have had one fear relieved and another type of fear replaces it. It will be a while before the disciples figure out who Jesus is.

We know what will come and we have nearly two-thousand years of seeing how the followers of Jesus suffered, endured, and brought others to the faith. But sometimes, maybe most of the time, we still look to Jesus to rouse from his sleep and perform a quick miracle to make things right, to alleviate our troubles, and reduce our suffering.

People that we call saints of the church have realized that we have more agency than solely prayer. I do not discount prayer, but I also do not discount our ability to act out of prayer. It was Saint Teresa of Avila who said that “Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

We are tasked to act in the name of God and Christ Jesus our Lord. We are not just to pray for the poor and needy to be fed, we are to feed them. Thus we participate in the Seven Loaves ministry. It is not a miracle or an heroic act. It is thinking about others when we go to the grocery store.

When our friend gets sick we don't just pray we get him to the hospital. WE check on him during his stay and get him home. When he arrives home we see that he has food to eat in his fridge. When someone is in distress we visit. We take a prayer shawl. We pray, and comfort and hug.

The community of faith, even when its faith is shaken by the storms, bands together and reaches out in the name of Christ.

The disciples still had much to learn on the day they crossed the Sea of Galilee. We have the advantage of their learning. We have the advantage of their discipleship and apostleship. We have learned and can continue to learn as we encounter the storms of this life. Some of which we think will swamp our boat and takes us down.

We can pray, we can have faith, we can act, and we can reach out to others whose boats are getting swamped. Yours are Jesus' eyes that look on this hurting world with love, yours are Jesus' feet that walk toward those who are hurt, alone, and feel separated from God's love, and yours are Jesus' hands reaching out in mercy and peace to all who feel the world has turned against them. To someone you are Jesus when you can look upon them with Jesus in your heart recognizing the Jesus in their heart. Compassion can be hard, but you would not be here if you were not drawn to the light of the world, Jesus Christ, who radiates compassion and love to all of God's children. Which reminds me of a song from my childhood, “Red and yellow, brown, black and white they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world.”