

People come to speak to me for many reasons  
and with many questions and problems  
but one way of summing up what many people say to me  
is the story in this gospel passage.

So many people come to me and, in a variety of ways tell me,  
“Father, my boat is out on a stormy sea,  
the waves are crashing over me,  
and it seems like Jesus is sleeping through the whole thing.  
Doesn't Jesus care about me?

If you've raised a child, or two or ten,  
you know how high the waves can rise...  
If you've given yourself to someone in marriage,  
you know how strong the winds can blow ...  
If you've ever cared for someone chronically or terminally ill,  
you know quickly the boat can fill with water,  
no matter how fast you try to bail it out...  
If you've ever been abused by someone,  
you know the confusion of facing a God  
who seems to sleep through your nightmares...  
If you believe in the might and power and love of God,  
you, too, have cried out,  
“Lord, don't you see - don't you care that we are perishing?”

Our life stories read like a ship's log,  
recording times of smooth sailing,  
slow, frustrating passage through the doldrums,  
and the frightening chaos of storms threatening our voyage.

And often, we find Jesus, our ship's Captain, asleep in the stern.  
Of course, we can always wake him – he's a light sleeper!  
And sometimes, as in today's story,  
Jesus stirs from his nap, utters his powerful word,  
and the storm -whatever it might be- dies down - and all's well.

But not always...  
He doesn't always calm the storm.  
At time, he seems almost impassive,  
riding the storm with us,  
tossed about with us by the swelling, threatening waves  
but not lifting a hand or speaking a word  
to bring the calm we long for, the calm we pray for,  
the calm we so desperately desire...

There's only one Lord:  
the one we rush to waken when the storm breaks upon us,  
the one we hope in and pray to, the one who calms the seas,  
he is the same Lord who sometimes disappoints us,

seems to fail us, does not rescue us but rather joins us  
as the storm overwhelms us and those we love...

The cross is a sign that Jesus is no stranger to the storm:  
he himself cried out in anguish to his Father  
when he felt abandoned as the sky darkened  
with the clouds of his impending death.

Sometimes when I'm speaking with someone  
whose life's voyage has entered stormy waters,  
I'll ask, "What are you praying for?"

I hear a variety of responses:  
I'm praying for health, for a cure, for a successful surgery;  
for a job;  
for peace in my marriage, in my family, in my heart;  
for someone I love; for someone to love...

And sometimes when I ask, "What are you praying for?"  
the answer comes,  
"Father, I'm praying that God will get me through  
whatever comes my way..."

*That's* the prayer, *there's* the faith  
that I want to be my own when the seas I sail are rough.

It's not a prayer that would turn away a miracle -  
miracles are always welcome -  
but it's a faith accepting of Jesus  
whose power may sometimes calm our storms  
but whose greatest calm may be the promise and gift  
of riding out our storms with us.

Jesus is always my captain:  
when the sailing is smooth, in the doldrums and in the storm.

He sometimes appears to sleep, but he is easily wakened.  
When he says, "Quiet! Be still!"  
it may not be the stormy seas he's addressing  
but rather, he may be speaking to my storm tossed heart.

*"Quiet... be still... I am with you..."*

He may not calm the storm,  
but he will never abandon my ship.

At this table, the Lord never sleeps  
but is always the vigilant host,  
inviting us to nourish our faith and prayer  
on the gift he left for us on the altar of the cross  
where he wondered if his Father had abandoned him.

The Father raised up his beloved Son  
and he is with us now.  
Let us be quiet... let us be still...  
The One whom even the wind and sea obey  
has come to calm our storm tossed hearts.

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