

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A-2011)

St. Charles - Meredith

Storms (on the ground and at sea), earthquakes, fires, famine, poverty, and terrible perils – all these appear in today's readings. In our times, we come face to face with a world pandemic, tropical storms that destroy properties, medical issues, economic uncertainty, racial struggles, broken relationships, and all kinds of other chaos and change.

Where, it is asked, is God in all of this? The answers we hear are many and varied. *"It's God's will,"* some say. Some ask: *"If God is such a good God, why does He allow such things to happen?"* Others believe that God is a myth constructed by weak-minded people to help prop themselves up in the face of suffering, disaster and loss. Some others wonder: *"How can you believe in a God that allows such things to happen?"* What should we believe? What should we think in the physical and moral storms that surround us?

To answer, I take you back to the beginning of things, creation ... in the Book of Genesis. There we find God creating order out of chaos. He pushes back the boundaries of chaos into order to create an ordered and purposeful universe. Then God goes on to invest us with the dignity of intelligence and free will and the task of joining with Him in bringing creation to completion. He charges us to work with Him in pushing back the boundaries of chaos. He puts His faith in us to work with Him in overcoming all that would smother life, charging us to be His stewards over the world He has made and given over to us. Instead of questioning God perhaps we should ask ourselves this question: *"How well have we worked along side of God ... and cooperated with God?"*

In the New Testament we find the Son of God entering into our broken world to share the way, the truth and life with us. Jesus not only enters into our broken world but also enters into its suffering. God's involvement, God's presence, is with us as we face sin and suffering. God is not a disinterested and aloof God – He shares with us all that we face in a dislocated and incomplete world.

That's the way it was when we find Peter in today's Gospel account ... walking on our world's stormy waters. Peter relied on God's presence in Christ – he was walking toward Christ keeping his eyes fixed on Christ. The greater thing was that Peter was not so much walking on those storm-tossed waters as he was keeping his eyes fixed on Christ and was walking toward Him. But while Peter was making his way to Christ, disaster struck. And what was that disaster? FEAR took a hold of his heart. FEAR made him divert his attention away from Christ and he became fixated on the stormy waters.

We need to pay attention to our fears. We need to understand that, for so many of us, fear controls our choices more than any other force in our lives. Think of the decisions you have made ... the actions you have taken that were based more on fear rather than on confidence ... choices that were based more on fear than on love. Fear is a powerful tool in the hands of the Evil One. Fear is one of the greatest weapons of the devil.

Confidence (which can be understood as keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus) is the message presented to us today. Confidence! Confidence comes from a Latin word that means, “to believe with.”

We cannot have confidence when we're isolated and all alone. We cannot survive life's trials all by ourselves. No, we can only have confidence when there's another near us. Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus is the best way to hold onto confidence.

And that's the point of today's readings. One can find confidence even in the worst of storms ... even in the most chaotic of trial. We can get through the worst that life can throw at us only IF we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus up our contact with God.

When we don't pray ... when we don't worship ... when we try to go it all alone ... we'll only be able to hear the screaming wind, and feel our foundation become insecure and ... we'll sink!

Where is God in all of this? He's right here in the boat of the Church. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus and he keeps his eyes on us and believe that, with Him, we can face anything life throws at us.