

## Funeral homily for Carol Ann Lafleur

“On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, “Let us cross to the other side” (Mk. 4:35).

One of the unsung heroes of nineteenth century England was Matthew West, a young man who served in the merchant navy. In 1875, he became the first to successfully swim across the English Channel in twenty one hours and forty minutes. His journey began on the shore of Dover, England, and ended at the shore of Calais, France. He was not the first to attempt the challenge of crossing the channel. All the others failed. His notable achievement made him an instant celebrity in his homeland.

Among the many challenges he faced in his swim to fame were strong currents, howling winds, frigid water temperatures and stings from jellyfish. Headwinds made the swim even more difficult. Because of the tidal currents influenced by the wind, twenty one miles became thirty-nine miles.

In today’s gospel, the “other side” is a symbol of and a reference to our ultimate destination, which is heaven. In his masterful account of the disciples’ journey across the Sea of Galilee he states that an unexpected storm arose. The waves were breaking over the bow and it began to take in water badly. The disciples of Jesus feared the boat in which they were passengers might capsize. Clearly, their lives were at risk. Uncertainty marked their journey to the other shore. The thought must have occurred to them that they may not even reach the other side safely. They feared for their lives.

That is precisely the reason they turned to Jesus for help. “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mk. 4:38).

“Jesus was in the boat, asleep on a cushion” (Mk. 4:38). Knowing that Jesus is a fellow passenger should be enough to allay our fears.

One important lesson we can derive from today’s gospel is that we Christians cannot reach the other side without a storm in our life. When storms do appear, let us bear in mind that Jesus is in the boat with us. In the face of life’s uncertainties, we are not alone. Christ is with us. He may seem to be sleeping, but he is fully awake to what is happening in our respective lives.

A second question to consider is the identity of the one who awaits us on the other shore of life.

Some years ago, a terminally ill woman, was asked by her doctor if she feared death. Her response is worth noting. “No, I do not fear death. I know who awaits me on the other shore”.

A fierce storm arose in Carol’s life. It proved to be as significant a challenge as crossing the English Channel was for a young Navy officer.

She persevered. She did not abandon ship.

Like Our Blessed Lord, she could have offered words of relief, “It is finished”, as she crossed over to the “other side”. And now she can rest in peace.