

“The sea was stirred up because a strong wind was blowing” and the image of Jesus walking on the water was also frightening for the apostles (John 6:18-19). If you have ever been on a river or out to sea when the weather is rough, you can understand their natural fear of the power of the mighty waters. This scene in the Gospel of John (6:16-21) is reminds of Psalm 107:

“Some went off to sea in ships, plied their trade on the deep waters.

They saw the works of the LORD, the wonders of God in the deep.

He commanded and roused a storm wind; it tossed the waves on high.

They rose up to the heavens, sank to the depths; their hearts trembled at the danger.

They reeled, staggered like drunkards; their skill was of no avail.

In their distress they cried to the LORD, who brought them out of their peril;

He hushed the storm to silence, the waves of the sea were stilled” (Ps 107:23-29).

Even without being in a storm at sea, we may be able to relate. In the dark of night, the storms of our life often seem to be out of control. We may feel all alone and be overcome with fear, but we are not alone.

It is amazing how quickly the violent storm turns around when Jesus arrives. There is no doubt that he is in control. He calms the winds. He calms the seas. He calms the fears of the apostles and they are immediately safe on the shore. Jesus can do the same for us.

I am reminded of a prison visit I made some years ago. My fear level rivaled that of the apostles. I prayed to God to calm my own fears which helped immensely. I visited a woman whose mind had grown dark amidst the swirl of her own violent storm of thoughts and worries. God is more powerful than any of our fears.

I brought the light of Christ to her by telling the story of the Prodigal Son. Her thoughts were still swirling like a storm. Together we began to pray the Rosary. Each Our Father ended with a prayer for peace. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Each Hail Mary ended with the reassurance of help from heaven. “Pray for us sinners now.”

The calming presence of Jesus happened more gradually than in the Gospel account with the apostles, but it was none the less impressive. Jesus had arrived in the midst of this woman’s own living hell. He brought light, and peace, and calm.

“They rejoiced that the sea grew calm, that God brought them to the harbor they longed for.

Let them thank the LORD for his mercy, such wondrous deeds for the children of Adam.

Let them extol him in the assembly of the people, and praise him in the council of the elders” (Ps 107:30-32).

I left the jail awed by the way Jesus reached out and calmed the storms in her life. As he did for the Apostles, Jesus is waiting for you to call out to him in need so that he may once again respond, “It is I. Do not be afraid” (Jn 6:20).