

I suspect that many of us frequently ask the question that the Apostles asked in today's gospel: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" The answer is: of course Jesus cares but God often allows bad stuff to happen to test us, to strengthen us, and/or to draw our attention to areas of our lives we have been neglecting. The image of Jesus asleep in the boat is a sign to us that God is not anxious about anything and we need to learn to trust in his plan.

That was also the message to Job in the first reading. Job was a righteous man who was allowed to undergo extreme suffering because God made a bet with Satan that Job would remain faithful. It is very easy for us to say "That isn't fair!" The other side of this, though, shows God's utter confidence and faith in Job. God wasn't concerned about making a bet with Satan because he had total confidence that Job wouldn't let him down.

Job did not let God down; he remained faithful, but he didn't know why he was being made to suffer and he demanded answers from God. We heard a tiny portion of God's response in the first reading and it isn't very satisfying. Instead of answering Job's questions, God asks questions of his own, essentially saying, "Hey buddy, do you know how all this stuff you see around you works? I am the one who created it all. Trust me. I know what I am doing way better than you do." Job accepted the rebuke and was rewarded by receiving back an superabundance compared to what he had lost.

God is not worried about anything. He has a plan and he wants us to have total confidence in his plan. The catechism addresses this in paragraph 305: "Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our Heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs. 'Therefore do not be anxious, saying "What shall we eat?" Or "What shall we drink" ... Your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.'" So God has a plan and he is completely in control. Great. Why are things so messed up? From our perspective, it seems as if Jesus is still asleep in the boat so we cry out, "Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?"

The catechism addresses this as well in the very next paragraph to what I just gave you; actually it is the same paragraph I gave you last weekend: paragraph 306 says: "God is the sovereign master of his plan. **BUT** to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' cooperation. This use is not a sign of weakness [on God's part], but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the

dignity of acting on their own...and of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan”

God has a plan but he wants our help to bring it to completion. When we see things that we know are WRONG, things that pierce our hearts, perhaps God is inviting us to ask ourselves, “What can I do to help make things right?” I am referring to things that are WRONG or EVIL, not to things that annoy us because we are fussy. When our eyes are opened to things we know are just plain wrong, how can we cooperate with Jesus to make things right?

A lot of the evil we see in the world seems too big to tackle ourselves. For example, world peace. Even with God’s help we can’t bring peace to the world on our own as individuals...but we can ask ourselves, “How am I a peacemaker at home, at work, in my community?” We should also be aware of how we are disruptors of peace. This is how we as individuals can plant the seeds of peace in small ways, trusting that God will help them produce great fruits. I could go on with this, but the USCCB has published an examination of conscience based on the principles of Catholic social teaching. This examination asks surprisingly simple and practical questions which prompt us to consider how God is asking us to cooperate with him in accomplishing his plan. Copies of these examinations are available on the tables in the breezeway.

There are storms brewing all around us. It is very easy to pretend they aren’t there and to tell ourselves it isn’t our problem and that we cannot or do not need to get involved. Jesus is the one who will calm the storm, but he is inviting each one of us to take action to minimize the impact and to help those affected by the storms. Braving these storms requires courage. Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyways. We cannot let our fear keep us from acting in the way Jesus is inviting us to act. Let us try to be awake to the needs of our neighbors and show them that we do care and in so doing show them the face of Jesus.