

Do you not yet have faith?

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B) Mk 4:35-41

Ave Maria Catholic Church. June 23, 2024. Fr. David M Vidal

“A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mk 4: 37-38).

Do we not identify ourselves with the disciples’ situation, fears, and question? Perhaps we have not experienced a storm at sea, but the storms of life are many, diverse, and intense. In those moments, we may also feel that the boat is filling up and that sinking is a real possibility. Then, the question comes: *“Lord, do you not care that I am perishing?”*

Is God away from us? Is God disinterested in us? Why are those storms present in our lives?

We must start answering these questions by saying that God is not away from us. If that were possible, we would not be. The fact that we are is a clear sign that God is with us. He created us and holds us in our existence.

God thought about us from all eternity, created us, and has a most beautiful plan for each one of us: and that is our eternal happiness. God did not bring the storms into our lives; we did. The storms of life began when our first parents decided to separate themselves from God, and they continue as part of our own experience.

Our storms are sufferings and trials, physical or spiritual. Why do they come?

Sometimes, those storms come because we create them. That happens when we imitate our first parents and rebel against God and his beautiful plan for us. Our own sins create storms, and sooner or later, we will experience their effect. In those moments, God is not asleep, but we are. We close our eyes to that truth, goodness, and beauty that we should love and enjoy. In those moments, we should not say that God does not care for us. We should rather say that we do not care for ourselves!

Those storms wake us up. Then, touched by God’s grace, we are able to say in those moments: *“Lord, save me!”*

However, there is another important reason that explains the presence of those storms in our lives. Storms test our character, just as soldiers are tested on the battlefield. How would we know that we are truly brave? How would we know we are courageous and ready to defend what is good, true, and beautiful if we never have the occasion to fight for it?

This is the reason why God allows us to be tested. The book of Tobit says, *“Because you were acceptable to God, it was necessary for you to be tested by trials.”* (Tobit 12: 13). It is the Ignatian teaching, *“Sometimes God wishes to try us, or we can say, allows trials and temptations in our lives in order to see how much we are worth, or how much we love what is worthy of praise and ultimately how much we love Him.”* (Spiritual Exercises).

But still, there is another reason that illuminates the importance of our storms. In those moments of trials, we are purified. Those are the moments we realize that we cannot trust ourselves, but we must put our trust in God. Storms are moments of growth. We grow in humility, patience, trust, and abandonment in the Divine Providence, knowing that if God allows that to happen, it is because something good will come from it.

That was the conviction of Blessed Cardinal Wyszynski, a Poland Cardinal and confessor of faith. Wyszynski was Poland's Primate from 1948 to 1981, during the time when the Polish communist government persecuted the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Cardinal Wyszynski was imprisoned from 1953-1956.

In his first days as a prisoner, he wrote these lines: “I made the decision to schedule my time in such a way as to avoid any questioning thoughts. . . . The daily schedule never changed and was maintained with monastic precision.

5:00 am Rising, Morning Prayer – Meditation – Mass – Thanksgiving - Breakfast, Breviary – One part of the rosary. At 9:15 am, it was time to work on a book. He was writing a book.

Afternoon, Meal – Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament – Walk a free time – Evening Prayer – And a part of the rosary, usually during walks.

At 3:30 pm, Again, work on a book. Breviary. Supper. Reading in German. Rosary. Singing of religious hymns.

At 8:45 pm. Work, reading, retiring.

With that exercise, Card. Wyszynski began a path of profound conversion and real humility.

And his submission to Divine Providence only increased with time. He wrote in the same year: *“I see more and more clearly that the most appropriate place for me...is in prison.”*

(And two years later) *“It is two years today since my imprisonment. During this time, I came to the firm conclusion that whatever God did, He did with divinely just judgment . . . praise with all my heart the Lord’s justice . . . Looking at my entire priestly life, I grant You, Father, that You were right to take me away from your altars and pulpit. Thank you for standing in defense of Your Church, for defending her from me; for defending the*

sanctity of Yours altars from my unworthy service, for defending Your flock from such a poor shepherd. I am Your ally in Your battle against me, Father- a very sincere ally. So wage Your battle against me, Father, I will aid You against myself.”

On May 13, 1981, in St. Peter's Square in Vatican City, Pope John Paul II was shot and wounded by Mehmet Ali Ağca. When, Card. Wyszynski heard of the assassination attempt, he offered his own life for that of the Pope. And he died fifteen days later, at the age of 79, of abdominal cancer.

Trials purify us and make our lives truly beautiful!

To achieve holiness, all that is necessary is to accept the trials of the present life and face them with faith! What was the difference between the good thief and the bad thief at the scene of the crucifixion? Both suffered the same trial, but one lived that moment with faith, as a moment of expiation and redemption, while the other only saw pain and a waste of time.

When we face our own storms, let us acknowledge that God is not away from us and that He truly cares for us. We just need to pray and ask: *“Lord, increase our faith!”*