



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

Homily

[*Job* 38:1-4, 8-11; *Psalms* 107; *2Corinthians* 5:14-17; *Mark* 4:35-41]

On Friday we all received the good news that pandemic restrictions will soon be lifted in their entirety. As I listened to the announcement, I also heard that, effective that very day, I could book an appointment for my second shot. Later that day I followed up and went to my computer to see what I could arrange.

When I logged on to the AHS booking website, I read in big bold letters that I was in a rather lengthy queue. 88,000 people were in line ahead of me! Then I read that my wait time would be more than one hour, and I thought, “No kidding!” It didn’t say exactly how much more, so I decided to leave the site and come back to it another time. The next morning, I clicked on again, and was informed that I had a mere 750 people in front of me, and that my wait time would be three minutes. I found that astounding, so I stayed on line and – sure enough – the timing was exactly as predicted and I was able to book my appointment at a time that fit well in my calendar.

Most Albertans are involved in the same thing right now, and I suggest this experience can be a helpful background against which to appreciate what the scriptural passages for this mass are saying to us. Their message is this: the Lord Jesus hears and answers our prayers but he does not indicate a wait time for the response, so hold fast in faith and trust in his love. Let’s unpack this.

To begin, I must say I was impressed by the broad capacity of the booking system both to receive and process a massively large number of requests for appointments. In terms of magnitude, that pales in comparison with all that Jesus hears from us. When I first approached the booking site, I was one of nearly 90,000 people, and having to wait more than an hour left me a bit disheartened. When we approach Jesus in prayer, we are one among billions of people, yet there is no waiting for the Lord to hear us. Our every prayer comes instantly before him and receives his full attention. Where we can grow disheartened is from the inability to know when or how the answer will come. This is especially the case when we find ourselves in situations that are painful or threatening.

Instructive here is the experience of the disciples in that storm-tossed boat. Implicit in the text from Mark’s Gospel is an invitation to place ourselves in the boat with the disciples as we face today either external storms threatening to swamp us - job loss, family strife, illness of a loved one, and the like - or internal tempests causing our hearts to sink - fear, guilt, misunderstanding, remorse, and so on. This is when we want the response from Jesus to be immediate. In the absence of a clear and rapid timeline, it can feel as if Jesus is asleep in our boat, inattentive and uncaring. The temptation is to “leave the booking site”, as it were, to walk away from the Lord and look for other solutions of our own doing. Deep down,

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we know that such self-reliance will surely sink us. So, what are we to do, particularly in challenging circumstances, when the Lord does not act at a time that “fits well in my calendar” of expectations?

Well, the first thing to do, at all times but especially when we are anxious, is to ponder the question posed by the disciples: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” The answer, obviously, is that Jesus is God Incarnate. No earthly power, no natural force, is greater than he. There is no problem beyond his reach. Jesus is God, and for God nothing is impossible. I admit to you my concern that many people today, even in the Church, have lost sight of this truth about Jesus, and consider him to be no more than an exceptional human being, a wonderful teacher of his day who, having lived over 2000 years ago, has no relevance for our lives now. Let’s be careful, particularly in moments of difficulty, that we do not succumb to that error. Rather, let’s hold fast to the Church’s faith, which, as St. Paul puts it, does not assess Christ from within a limited human perspective, but accepts what Jesus has revealed about himself – that he is the all-powerful Son of God, who loves us beyond imagining. He has manifested that love by his suffering and death, and proven its power by his resurrection. So, especially when we are in difficulty and beginning to doubt, let’s not only ponder the question “Who is this that even the wind and sea obey him,” but also contemplate the answer: Jesus is God, all-powerful, who loves each of us more than we can know and is constantly responsive to our every need.

Then, secondly, let’s allow that love of Jesus to “impel us”. That is St. Paul’s famous expression. Knowledge of the divine love impels us to hold fast in faith, especially when we are not sure of the timeline of response to our prayers. When we are seized by the truth of who Jesus is and the power of his love, then the timeline doesn’t matter. Impelled by the truth of his love we know that, whatever our storm, we can say to him with confidence, “You’ve got this, Jesus. I know I can trust in you.” This love of Christ also impels us outward toward others. As soon as I had made my booking for the second “jab”, I right away felt impelled to share the good news with family and friends. There is no shortage of evangelizers when it comes to the vaccine. Well, our world needs much more than news about vaccine availability. It needs above all to hear the truth of Jesus Christ and the encouragement to turn all things over in faith to the power of his love. This is where evangelization really does need to happen, and that falls to us. Our own experience of the all-powerful and all-sufficient love of Jesus impels us to share his good news as source of hope for the world.

Jesus, who by a mere word stilled the storm to a whisper, is with us now in the Eucharist. He is not a mere man who once lived on earth but lives no more. He is God, who lives forever and remains always with his Church, especially in the sacraments. Here and now, then, with full faith, let us cry out to him from our “boats,” confident he will respond in the power of his love, though we know not when.

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
St. Joseph’s Basilica
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