

20-5-2021

12th Ordinary Sunday - 20 June 2021

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Recommended Citation

Moore, Gerard. "12th Ordinary Sunday - 20 June 2021." *Pastoral Liturgy* 51, no. 3 (2021): 1-6. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol51/iss3/11>

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20 June 2021

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

The disciples in his boat, and the followers in companion boats, marvel at Jesus' ability to sleep in the storm and then wake to calm it. His power over nature is something we could do with in the present. Yet the Gospel carries an underlying caution. As much as those in the company of Jesus are amazed, their faith remains weak and sporadic as they continue to misunderstand. In effect, their faith and indeed ours does not grow through the miraculous but through identification with the message and direction of Jesus.

Collect of the Sunday

Our collect this Sunday is an ancient text from the prayer life of parishes in seventh century Rome which reminds that the Christian people exist in and through the steadfast firmness of God's love. We are established in the core of God's existence.

The prayer focuses particularly on the active fidelity of God's love which sustains the relationship of the faithful. God continues to govern the people, established in divine love and never abandoned. God's governance is founded in this love, while the sacred mandates of divine law are all ordained towards love. The earliest known liturgical context of the prayer sets it between the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost, allowing the prayer to point to the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

The Church is characterised by both fear and love of God. The pious devotion and observance of the community is based in its love for God. Through the gift of fear the faithful humbly acknowledge God's steadfast love, mercy and deliverance, and respond with devout service. This response is the heart of our worship, the source and inspiration of our wisdom, and the impulse that directs us to build the reign of God.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you saved us from fear. Lord, have mercy.

You call us into faith. Christ, have mercy.

You remain with us until the end of time. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Job 38:1, 8-11

The Lord addresses the grieving Job, and reminds him that the power of God is beyond all limits

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Paul calls us to the power of the resurrection of Jesus: once we hold onto the love manifested in the resurrection we realize that all creation has already begun to be made new.

Gospel Reading

Mark 4:35-41

Jesus shows his power over the forces of nature, as the disciples struggle to understand who he is.

Reflection

From Mark we have a vivid passage, full of storm and fear. At its centre is Jesus, asleep on a cushion. The setting of the story is Jesus' power over nature, but there is much more going on. We cannot let our interest in Jesus the miracle worker obscure the multiple dynamics in the reading.

However, first to the miracle. This passage is one of five miracle stories in a row. For the evangelist they establish that Jesus and the reign of God hold sway over the range of powers. Our story is around the power of nature but following are narratives around the power of the demonic, illness (two stories) and death. None of these forces can withstand the reign of God. The nature miracle fits well the geographic context. The Sea of Galilee is known for sudden violent storms that catch sailors unaware with strong winds and high waves. Jesus seems unworried, neither for his boat nor the other boats with him. Unsurprisingly (for a reader of Mark in any case) Jesus brings calm showing his power over nature. And what should be unsurprising for us is that the miracle stories are not only about the miracle. There are other surprises.

Jesus is growing a followership. Other boats accompany them and fall prey to the storm. These vessels fall out of the story but remain within the frame. The disciples and sundry others are following up on Jesus' invitation to 'get to the other side'. The journey is a transition of their belonging, a form of displacement. To follow Jesus is to go with him!

Yet they are poor companions. Their journey is marked by fear, a sense compounded as the waters wash into the craft reminiscent of the waters of chaos destabilizing creation. The disciples notice the waves, the storm, the waters but not the calm of the Lord. As understandable as this may be, their eyes are not on the

master. They are not entirely faithful disciples, continuing to take their cue from what is around them. Further, their focus is on themselves: *do you not care that we are perishing*. The revelation of Jesus as having dominion over nature fills them with awe, yet it is a sentiment of little depth. Faith in Jesus has barely taken root in them. We have here Mark setting in place his theme throughout the Gospel as a whole that though the disciples cross with Jesus and are insiders, they continue to misunderstand him. They misread Jesus' composure as indifference. They hear and see but they do not understand. Their final question then is *who is this?*

Mark's Gospel presents some difficult challenges for us today. Perhaps front and centre to our minds is the dominion over nature. We have just come through catastrophic bushfires, smoke and pollution and loss of life and home. This has been followed by heat, floods and the pandemic. Some mastery over nature by Jesus would come in handy, but the motif of dominion taken up from translations of Gen 1:26 has not served humanity well. Nor does Jesus power over nature help when prayers for aid amidst devastation and panic did not result always in a better outcome.

It is here we have to be a bit more inquisitive about what the passage wants to say around miracles and the power of Jesus. Mark has no doubt of the power of Jesus and does not seek to provide proofs. In this miracle text and the ones that follow, Jesus is for Mark a miracle worker and so the evangelist sets out the range of Jesus' power. This miracle is around power over nature. But Mark is at pains to point out that the working of miracles does little to build the faith of the disciples. They remain terrified. They also remain bewildered – 'who is this man'. They continue to follow but they have not yet caught faith – 'do you not yet have faith'. Yet they do not stay behind, they come in their boatloads. The reading calls us to a radical discipleship and commitment that is beyond being fed by miracles and is committed to the master alone.

The lectionary has paired the Gospel with a passage from Job. It is not quite a perfect match. In the midst of his lament, Job is reminded of the unlimited power of God. The Lord is not over awed by nature, no matter how dangerous and powerful it appears to humans, and to the isolated and downtrodden Job. In this, the reading is a good match for the calmness of Jesus in the midst of the storm and his ability to still the raging waters. Our text from Job highlights the miracle, while Mark is more interested in the journey of faith.

Our reading from 2 Corinthians sits independent of the texts from Mark and Job, yet there are some serendipitous connections. Paul sets out some of the implications of the discipleship to which Mark is challenging us. Paul stresses our love for Christ in light of the resurrection. It has its roots in Jesus' willingness to die for all. It is a transformative love, enabling us to recognise that in the resurrected Jesus, all people and, by extension, all things have been made new. We now live amidst an emerging new creation with all created reality now understood in the light of the saving death and death conquering resurrection of Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

In the psalm we are called to give thanks to the Lord because his love is everlasting. In the knowledge of such abundant love, we offer these petitions.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church in Australia as the Plenary Council approaches. May all members of the Council know that through the power of the Holy Spirit the needs of our Catholic community will be met.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders throughout the world that they will approach the serious difficulties faced through the pandemic and climate change with strength and a strong desire for peaceful solutions.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our local community that they will be strengthened through positive responses to the pandemic and renewed values of sharing of resources.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who live in fear. Jesus is able to calm all fears so may they find a way to know him through those who authentically lead Christian lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are ill or bereaved. May they find comfort and compassion in the caring hands of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those in parts of the world that are struggling with oppression and injustice. May they find ways to work in peace and bring just solutions to all of their problems.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

In gratitude for God's everlasting love, we bring these needs of our world and our community with the sure hope that they will be granted through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Be not afraid. R. Dufford SJ. 449
Christ is made the sure foundation. John M. Neale/ H. Purcell. 482
How can I keep from singing? R. Lowry. 454
I heard the voice of Jesus say. H. Bonar/ R. V. Williams. 468
Love divine, all loves excelling. C. Wesley. 463
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts. 459
O Christ, the great foundation. T. Lew/ S. Wesley. 483
Praise the Lord, you heav'ns, adore him. E. Osler/ Beethoven. 409
This day God gives me. J. Quinn SJ/ Gaelic melody. 536
Though the mountains may fall. D. Schutte. 453
We walk by faith. M. Haugen. 447

AOV1

Be not afraid. R. Dufford SJ. 114
How great thou art. S. Kine. 94
I heard the voice of Jesus say. H. Bonar/ R. V. Williams. 54
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts. 175
Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven. H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78
Though the mountains may fall. D. Schutte. 182
We walk by faith. M. Haugen. 63

AOV2

Great is thy faithfulness. W. Runyan. 127

AOVK

All things bright and beautiful. C. F. Alexander/ W. H. Monk. 110

CWB

I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toolan. 718
O Christ, the healer, we have come. Frederick Pratt Green. 759
The Church of Christ, in every age. Frederick Pratt Green. 818

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Great God of mercy. James Quinn SJ. 126
Your hands, O Lord in days of old. Edward Hayes Plumptre. 129
The Church of Christ, in ev'ry age. Fred Pratt Green. 613
The cry of the poor. John Foley SJ. 618
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
O Christ, the healer we have come. Fred Pratt Green. 127

S&S1

The cry of the poor. John Foley, S.J. 63
I am the bread of life. John Michael Talbot. 153

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 106: *Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.*

Psalm 106: J. Robert Carroll/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 372

Psalm 107 (106): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 69

Give thanks to the Lord. Tony Alonso. LPB pg. 118

ALL THE WAVES OF
THE SEA WERE
HUSHED.

Ps 107:29

