

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

(Mt 8:23-7)

(Poem Vol.2, pp.230-3; Gospel Vol. 3, pp. 202-5)

(Jesus calms the storm)

(Maria says:) [...] Now that everybody is asleep I am telling you my joy. I “saw” today's Gospel. Mind you, this morning when I read it, I said to myself: “This is an episode of the Gospel which I will never see, because it is not very suitable for a vision.” Instead, when I was not thinking about it, it came to fill me with joy. This is what I saw.

A sailing boat, not excessively large, nor very small, a fishing boat, on which five or six people can move comfortably, is ploughing the water of the beautiful deep blue lake of Gennesaret.

Jesus is sleeping in the stern. He is dressed in white as usual. He is resting His head on His left arm and under His arm and head He has placed His blue-grey mantle, which has been folded many times. He is sitting, not lying, on the bottom of the boat and His head is resting on the board that is at the very end of the stern. I do not know how sailors call it. He is sleeping peacefully. He is tired and calm.

Peter is at the rudder. Andrew is busy with the sails, John and two more people - I do not know who they are - are sorting out the ropes and nets in the bottom of the boat, as if they were preparing to catch during the night. I would say that the day is drawing to its end because the sun is already setting in the west. All the disciples have pulled their tunics up, gathering them round their waists by means of belts, in order to be free in their movements, passing from one part of the boat to another, stepping over oars, seats, baskets and nets, without being hindered by their clothes. None of them is wearing a mantle.

I see that the sky is clouding over and the sun is hiding behind huge storm clouds, which have suddenly appeared from behind the top of a hill. The wind blows them fast towards the lake. The wind, for the time being, is high up, and the lake is still quiet, it is only becoming darker and its surface is no longer perfectly smooth. There are no waves as yet, but the water is beginning to ruffle.

Peter and Andrew watch the sky and the lake and are preparing to draw close to the shore. But the wind suddenly rages over the lake that in a few minutes surges foaming. The swelling waves clash one against the other, they strike the little boat, lifting it up, lowering it down, tossing it in all directions, thus preventing all manoeuvres of the rudder as the wind prevents manoeuvring the sail, which has to be lowered.

Jesus is sleeping. Neither the steps and excited voices of the disciples, nor the howling wind, nor the waves pounding on the sides of the boat and its prow, awake

Him. His hair is blowing in the wind and drops of water reach Him. But He is sleeping. John runs from stem to stern and covers Him with his mantle, which he has taken from under a board. He covers Him with delicate love.

The storm rages more and more furiously. The lake is as black as if ink had been poured into it and is streaked by the foam of the waves. The boat lets in water and is driven farther and farther to the open sea by the wind. The disciples are perspiring in their efforts to manoeuvre the boat and baling out the water which the waves pour in. But to no avail. They are paddling in the water that reaches up to their knees and the boat is becoming heavier and heavier.

Peter loses his calm and patience. He hands the rudder over to his brother, staggers towards Jesus and shakes Him vigorously.

Jesus wakes up and raises His head.

“Save us, Master, we are going down!” Peter shouts to Him (he must shout to make himself heard).

Jesus stares at His disciple, looks at the others and then at the lake. “Do you believe that I can save you?”

“Quick, Master” shouts Peter, while a real mountain of water moves fast from the centre of the lake towards the poor little boat. It is so high and dreadful that it looks like a water spout. The disciples who see it coming kneel down and hang on to whatever they can, certain that it is the end.

Jesus gets up. He stands on the stem board: a white figure against the livid storm. He stretches His arms out towards the billow and says to the wind: “Stop and be quiet” and to the water: “Calm down. I want it.” And the billow dissolves into foam, which falls harmlessly with a last roar, which fades into a whisper, while the wind dies down changing into a whistle and then a sigh. And the sky becomes clear once again over the appeased lake, while hope and faith fill the hearts of the disciples.

I cannot describe Jesus' majesty. One must see it to understand it. And I enjoy it inwardly because it is still present in my mind and I think of how placid was Jesus' sleep and how imperious was His command to the winds and the waves.

Jesus then says: “I will not expound the Gospel in the same sense as everybody else does. I will elucidate the circumstances preceding the Gospel passage.

Why was I sleeping? Did I perhaps not know that there was going to be a storm? Yes, I knew. Only I knew. Why was I sleeping, then?

The apostles were men, Mary. They were full of good will, but still very much "men". Man thinks he is always capable of everything. When he is really capable of doing

something he is full of haughtiness and attachment to his "ability". Peter, Andrew, James and John were good fishermen and consequently they thought they were unexcelled in handling a boat. As far as they were concerned I was a great "Rabbi", but a mere nothing as a sailor. Thus they thought I was unable to help them, and when on the boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, they begged Me to sit down because I was not capable of doing anything else. Also their love for Me was behind their attitude, as they did not want Me to do any material work. But their attachment to their own ability was greater than their love.

I do not impose Myself, Mary, except in exceptional cases. I generally leave you free and wait. On that day, tired as I was and being requested to rest, that is to let them act, clever as they were, I went to sleep. In My sleep there was mingled also the ascertainment of how man is "man" and wants to do things by himself without feeling that God asks but to help him. I saw in those "spiritual deaf men", in those "spiritual blind men", all the spiritual deaf and blind people, who throughout centuries would ruin themselves, because "they wanted to do by themselves", although I was bent over their needs awaiting to be asked to help them.

When Peter shouted: "Save us!", My bitterness dropped like a stone. I am not "man", I am the God-Man. I do not behave as you do. When someone rejects your advice or your help, and you see him in trouble, even if you are not so bad as to rejoice at it, you are uncharitable enough to look at him disdainfully and indifferently, without being moved by his shouts for help. Your attitude means: "When I wanted to help you, you did not want me? Well, help yourself now". But I am Jesus. I am the Saviour. And I save, Mary. I always save as soon as I am asked to.

The poor men might object: "In that case, why do You allow single or collective storms to break out?". If by My power I should destroy Evil, you would consider yourselves the authors of Good, which in actual fact is a gift of Mine, and you would not remember Me any longer. You would never remember Me. My poor children, you are in need of sorrow to remember that you have a Father. As the prodigal son remembered he had a father when he was hungry.

Misfortunes persuade you of your nothingness, of your ignorance, which is the cause of so many errors, of your wickedness, the cause of so much mourning and grief, of your faults, the cause of the punishments which you inflict upon yourselves, as well as of My existence, of My power and of My goodness.

That is what today's Gospel teaches you. "Your" Gospel of the present time, my poor children. Call Me. Jesus does not sleep except when He is in anguish because He sees that He is not loved by you. Call Me and I will come."
