

The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time: Conqueror of Chaos

A long time ago, when I was first ordained, I taught at Dominic Savio High School in East Boston, MA. Now, if you look at Boston on a map, you'll notice that it is in Eastern Massachusetts where the land meets the sea. While I was at Savio, a horrible blizzard hit, closing the city for about two weeks. As the blizzard was coming, we sent the students home early. The storm raged for over 24 hours. I had never seen anything like this. It was like a hurricane with snow. The city could not be evacuated because the roads were covered with snow. The blizzard, the Blizzard of 1978, resulted in many deaths, particularly those of people stuck in traffic jams on the highways. They couldn't move their cars, but they kept them running because it was so cold. What happened was that the snow came down so fast that the cars' tailpipes were quickly covered and the emissions, carbon monoxide, went into the passenger cabins killing many people. Only essential personnel were allowed out of their homes for a week, and many of these were transported by the National Guard, which had to be mobilized. When the restrictions were lifted, the roads cleared, and life returned to normal, I took a drive out by some of the nearby beaches, Winthrop Beach, Revere Beach, etc. I saw houses that were hundreds of yards away from the water, but which had their second story windows destroyed by the waves.

It is hard to explain the fury of the sea during a storm. It is something you hopefully will never experience. Imagine if you were in a small boat in a storm. Water crashes on the boat from the right, left, front and back. Will the boat break in two? Will it sink? It is complete chaos. So, understand the disciples' turmoil as the sea was about to claim their lives. But Jesus was there with them. Sleeping. Seemingly not concerned about the turmoil. They woke him up, and He stilled the sea and the wind. To the ancients, only God could control this chaos. But Jesus did. "Who is this whom even the wind and sea obey?" Jesus' disciples asked in today's Gospel. Jesus conquered the sea. But only God could take control of the sea. The disciples had been terrified. Jesus said that they should not have been afraid. They needed to have faith in Him.

There is a great deal of chaos in our world and in our individual lives. We have to have faith in the Lord to be with us through the chaos. Think about those who died for the faith, the martyrs. So many of them were surrounded by people jeering at them, mocking them, hurting them, killing them. They kept their faith in the Lord, and even those who were horribly tortured died in the peace of knowing that they were returning to the God they refused to reject. In this way God was present through the chaos.

All of us have experienced episodes of chaos in our lives. There are times that we feel that everything is falling apart. Most often we did not cause the chaos. We are victims of a world that has chosen the material over the spiritual, a world that has rejected God. Bad things happen to good people. A member of our family becomes chronically ill. Our family's life suddenly revolves around caring for him or her. Everyone in our family needs to muster up all the strength we have to help our loved

one fight the sickness. Or, perhaps there is a sudden accident and a lasting ailment like paralysis or tragic death or deaths. We might feel that our world is falling apart. It is then that we have to remember that the Lord is on the ship with us. We need faith. The One who conquers the sea, will conquer the chaos of our lives.

Worse, there are times that we are responsible for the chaos. We fall into sin and then experience what our sin has done to our family as well as to ourselves. We willingly chose that which is destroying us and those we love. We know that we have caused this. We deserve whatever is happening to us. But our family doesn't deserve what is happening to them. Do we dare to ask the Lord to get us out of the mess we have created? Yes. We have to trust in Him. He is on the ship of our lives. No matter what we have done, God can control the storm. He calls out to us in the middle of the storm to have faith in Him, to trust Him, to allow Him to conquer the storm.

The problem is that we, you and I, often don't have the faith in God we need. We see the chaos within us and don't even consider that God is stronger than the chaos.

Lauren Daigel, a fabulous contemporary Christian artist, wrote in her piece, "You say,":

*I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough
Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up.
Am I more than just the sum of every high and every
low.
Remind me once again just who I am because I need to know*

*You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak*

*And You say I am held when I am falling short
And when I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours*

*And I believe, (I) oh I believe (I)
What You say of me (I)
I believe*

*The only thing that matters now is everything You think of me
In You I find my worth, in You I find my identity.*

There is no chaos when the Lord is on the ship. There are challenges, many, many challenges, difficult challenges, horrible challenges, but chaos, forces that will destroy who we are, no, there is no chaos with the Lord. All that matters, as she says in the song, is that we find our identity, our self worth in the Lord.

“Who is this that even the wind and sea obey?” This is Jesus, the Victor over sin, the Victor over death. He is there in your lives and in my life, in our lives. We pray today for faith, the faith we need to trust in the Lord to conquer our chaos.