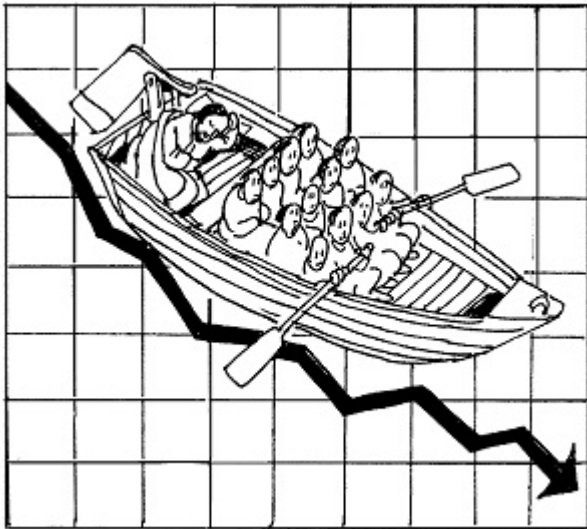


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by Pat Marrin

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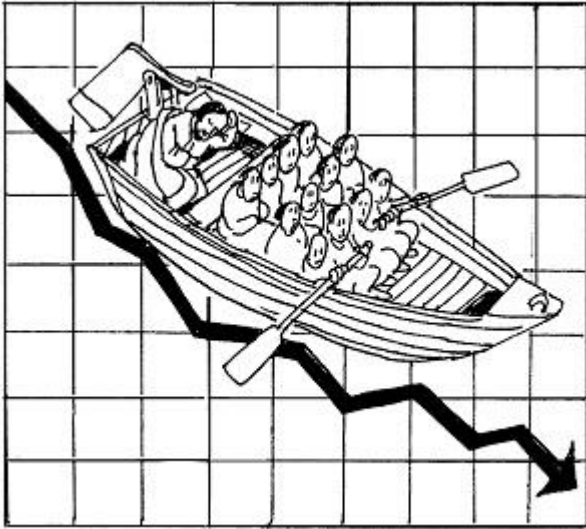
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“Let us cross over to the other side” (Mark 4:35).

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jb 38:1, 8-11; Ps 107; 2 Cor 5:14-17; Mark 4:35-41

A long time ago, before it was politically incorrect to find humor in over-beveraged people and natural disasters, a comic imitated a drunk during an earthquake walking perfectly straight while everyone else was pitching about and falling down. His normal gait was apparently a corrective in a world wildly out of kilter.

The late Paul Hinnebusch, a Dominican biblical and spiritual writer, once pointed out that the word used for a storm at sea in the Gospel was also the word for earthquake. More than a patch of bad weather, the stormy crossings of the Sea of Galilee were existential disturbances, a cracking open of all sense of reality at the deepest level, a cause for real terror. But these were also theophanies. The disciples encountered God in Jesus when their very existence was exposed and threatened.

The disciples learned through faith to trust that Jesus was with his church in crisis because they had experienced the earthquake, storm and theophany of his death and resurrection. He had taught them to navigate through each storm, to walk through each earthquake upright to make the crossing into freedom and new life. The risen Christ was not asleep (dead), or just a vision or a ghost story. They knew he was with them because they came through each crisis with renewed faith and the blessed assurance only God can give.

St. Paul survived three shipwrecks. When he described life in Christ as a baptism that takes us down into the waters of death and raises us up to new life, he knew what it meant to be saved. His Paschal Mystery, the core spirituality of every Christian, invites believers to make the same crossing and entrust everything to the crucified and risen Jesus. In Chapter 6 of his Gospel, Mark will connect another dramatic lake crossing with the multiplication of the loaves. Baptism and Eucharist are a single miracle of transformation by faith.

The potent theological meaning of these stories touches every freedom movement. As the country adds “Juneteenth” to its national holidays, we see the biblical resonance in the abolitionist cause, the underground railroad of heroic women like Harriet Tubman to help slaves “cross over” in an exodus to make real their promised emancipation.

Earthquakes occur when deep tensions build in the substructures of the earth. Storms form when broad forces of current, temperature, air mass and wind converge. The complex crises of our times have been long in the making and will shape basic challenges for our world going forward. To face them with courage and faith rather than fatalism and fear will define this generation. St. Paul urges us to trust the power of God to guide us through each crisis. If we are in Christ, he says, we are already part of a New Creation. “Old things are passing away; behold, new things are coming” (2 Cor 5:17).

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