

Sunday 13

A couple of nights ago on the television there was a re-run on the Kennedys. The section I watched was on 1968, the year that Robert Kennedy decided to run for the presidency. He was then 42 and the father of many children (eight or nine, I believe), but both he and his wife Ethel looked very young to me. There was footage of that last night when he exited through the kitchen of the building where he had just spoken and was gunned down there. What a tragedy! Indeed, the history of the Kennedy family is a Greek tragedy—great success then followed (the Greeks might have said “punished”) by great sorrow.

Many of you remember this family’s story. One daughter, Rosemary, was institutionalized; another, Kathleen, died in an airplane crash in WWII. So too did their oldest son, a pilot in that war. Then John and Robert were assassinated. So, of the nine children born to Rose and Joseph Kennedy, three of their four sons and one daughter died tragic deaths, and one other daughter spent much of her adult life in a home for the mentally disturbed.

A very small section of this program featured their mother, Rose. There she sat with her husband on one side and her one remaining

son, Teddy, on the other. I cannot remember the exact words she spoke, but I do know that she said that we cannot understand Almighty God's ways. We must simply believe in God's love and guidance of our lives and go on in that faith. Rose, like Job, had learned not to question God.

As far as I know, Rose Kennedy's cause for canonization has not yet been introduced, but I wonder why it hasn't been. Here is a woman who bore nine children, put up with a wayward husband, survived the death of four of her children and one daughter's lobotomy, and still believed in Almighty God's providential love. If that is not faith written in large letters, heroic faith, what is? That is what saints have.

In today's Gospel a violent squall comes up and begins to sink the boat carrying Jesus and his disciples. He is asleep. They have to wake him. They are really afraid, and they say to him: "Don't you care that we are perishing." As so often in the Gospels, especially in this Gospel of Mark, these fishermen don't come off very well. Look at the situation. Did they think that Jesus was not going to go down with them? But they are not concerned about him. They are concerned about themselves: "Don't you care that we are

perishing?” But we have to give them credit for this much: they knew who could help them.

In the Old Testament it is God and God alone who can control the winds and the sea. We see that in our first reading from Job for today. So it is clear who Jesus is. He is one with God. And these poor, frightened men somehow knew or intuited that. They believed that he could do as God did. He could command the wind and the sea, and they would obey him.

Our second reading today from Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians tell us that “whoever is in Christ is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Are we new creations in Christ? If we are, then we can confront the turmoil of our lives with trust in Jesus’ ability to get us through. All of us have or have had or will have turmoil in our lives. When that happens, we must do as the disciples did. In selfish desperation we must wake him (for it will appear that he is asleep) and cry out to him: Don’t you care that I am perishing? And the help will come. He will get up and command the wind and the sea, and they will obey him, for he is the Son of God.

Recently I listened to a group of people who are members of an organization called the Ignatian Volunteer Corps. This is an organization founded for retired people who want to do volunteer work but also want to add a spiritual dimension to their work by reflecting on it with a spiritual guide. Almost everyone in the group agreed that they did not know how they had gotten through the difficult moments in their lives. They could now see that they did not do that on their own. Their lives had been graced. God had helped them. Jesus had not been asleep. He was there silencing the winds and the waves.

May such a reflection be ours as well! May we reflect on our lives and realize that all was grace, that we were carried even when we were struggling and even when we thought we were doing it all on our own.

And so we pray: Lord, give those without work faith in you, that they will feel your support at this difficult time. Lord, give those who are very sick faith in you so that they will feel Your hand upon them. Lord, turn us towards those who need us. Amen.