

19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A - 2020

On an airplane heading to Rome, the pilot suddenly makes an announcement: “Ladies and gentlemen! Please, pay attention! I am sorry to let you know that we have a little trouble. We have lost one of the four engines. However, please stay calm, not to worry! We will be arriving Rome only one hour later than scheduled.”

A little while later the pilot alerts: “We have lost another engine. We will be arriving two hours late.” Not too long afterward, he announces again: “We have lost the third engine, and now only one engine runs. May I ask you, please stay calm! Doesn’t matter how late, I assure you that we will be arriving our destination.”

All people in the airplane get nervous, praying, crying: “Oh, my God! I am going to die! We all are going to die!”

The pilot tries to assure people: “Please, don’t panic, but stay calm. Since we have four Cardinals flying with us, we will be in Rome. I assure you; God will protect us.”

An old lady cries out loud: “In this situation, I would rather have all four engines than four Cardinals.”

We hear a similar situation in today’s Gospel. The disciples were on their journey by boat. The boat got into a heavy storm. The disciples cried out in fear: “Lord, save us! We are going to die!” In that critical moments, Jesus came encouraging them: “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” And he stretched out his hands to save them.

When facing death, most people fear. As for me, life experience teaches me not to fear death. For example, when driving the car, I think it is like we are going to battlefield, because we never know what is going to happen on the freeways in a few moments ahead. So, instead of fear, I rather say a prayer: “Lord, I put my life in your hand.”

It doesn’t mean with that confidence I would drive crazily, but it reassures me: what will be, will be, as in a famous song by Doris Day: “Que sera, sera. Whatever will be, will be. The future is not ours to see. Que sera, sera. What will be, will be.”

Perhaps, the moment when people have to face death is when they feel closer to God. I say that because I myself experienced a similar situation when I left Vietnam by boat. We 27 people – men, women and children – fled Vietnam in hurry and fear. We brought with us food and water for only a three-day journey as we thought... Unfortunately, we lost direction on the ocean. Food and water ran out. The engine was broken. We all cried, waiting to die of hunger and thirst.

Then a storm came. Although in fear, we were satisfied with the rainwater. Rough waves and heavy wind finally brought our boat into China shore... During this long journey of twenty-six days and nights, we faced death many times, but finally we arrived in Hong Kong as refugees.

Looking back this critical time, sometimes I laugh at myself. It was the first time I knew how to pray. I cried out to Jesus: “Lord, save us,” just as Peter did, because we feared the moments of death.

The event that the disciples face the storm symbolizes many troubles we face in our daily lives. Life doesn’t always go smoothly for most of us. Suffering and trouble are parts of life. Sometimes we bring troubles upon ourselves. Other times troubles just come our way. We fear when someone we love dies or is diagnosed with cancer. We feel troubled when we lost a job. Particularly now, we are still in trouble and affected by Covid-19 in different ways.

However, at such difficult times we don't need to struggle alone, for Jesus comes to us across the storms of life, with hand stretched out to save us, encouraging us: Do not be afraid. Here, I am with you.

There is another important point as we see Peter experience in today's Gospel: faith is an important factor for us to be saved. When Peter put his trust in Jesus, he was enabled to walk on the water. But then fear and doubt made Peter lost his focus on Jesus, and he failed. He sank. But Jesus stretched out his hands to save him.

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Let us examine ourselves: when things get stormy in life, do I focus on the storm or do I focus on Jesus?

When we cry for help, the Lord is always with us, to protect and save us. So, let us take courage. Do not be afraid. Have faith in the Lord Jesus, our stronghold, our refuge, and our Savior.

MASS INTENTIONS

(from Sun. August 9 to Sat. August 15 – the Assumption of Mother Mary)

Sunday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Peter Long (memorial - anniversary)
Monday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Laura Thomas (birthday)
Tuesday	No Mass
Wednesday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Mary Lafranchi (repose)
Thursday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Foge Family (for strength & healing)
Friday	8 a.m.	SC ...	Guido Mori-Prange (for health)
Assumption	8 a.m.	SC ...	Nathan Andrues (a special intention)