

# Sunday Homily

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

20 JUNE 2021

YEAR B

“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

Mark 4:38

### Illustration

For a time in the late 1970s, the daily news programmes on British television showed images of streets which were not cleaned, rubbish which was not collected, trains and buses which did not run. There seemed to be trouble everywhere. Everybody seemed to be on strike, even the dead were not being buried. The period was described as the “Winter of Discontent”. The then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, returning from a trip abroad, was met at the airport by dozens of journalists who asked him one simple question: “What are you going to do about the crisis?”

Trying to play down the situation, the Prime Minister reportedly responded: “Crisis? What crisis?” This underestimation of the gravity of the situation very soon afterwards cost Mr Callaghan his job.

### Gospel Teaching

In today’s Gospel we hear the lovely story of the storm at sea. It had been Jesus’ suggestion to take the boat across that evening. He then seems totally unconcerned when the gale gets up, and he remains fast asleep on the cushion. The first few chapters of Mark’s Gospel show the whirlwind of activity that Jesus has been living in, with crowds following him everywhere. So are we perhaps meant to think that he is just tired out? Too tired to notice the storm?

At first sight it looks as though Jesus, like the politician, has a similarly cavalier and almost irresponsible attitude to the danger he and the disciples face. While the disciples struggle to save their very lives, Jesus sleeps, either unaware or unconcerned at the situation. The disciples, not surprisingly, are singularly unimpressed and ask: “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” However, there is a big difference between the kind of complacency and indifference which we can often exhibit in the face of other people’s suffering and Jesus’ attitude here.

Jesus’ apparent lack of concern comes not from indifference, or even from weariness, but from an absolute trust and confidence in the power of God to save. Such was his intimacy with God that he never once doubted his Father’s

love for him. This is the faith which the disciples lacked – a real, deep and personal knowledge and experience of God’s total, unconditional love for them. It was this love which Christ himself came to manifest, to make present to his disciples. And Christ is the one who makes this saving relationship with God a real possibility for us, his present-day disciples.

## Application

As a Church and as individuals, we face many storms; many things seem to threaten to overwhelm us. As a Church, we face problems over the falling numbers in our parishes, the lack of people committing themselves to the ministry, the lack of consensus on many moral and doctrinal issues, even a lack of confidence in the Church’s relevance in the modern world. As individuals, we can feel swamped by depression, anger, hurts, resentments, failed relationships, jealousy, powerlessness and a sense of hopelessness. We can each add to this list.

The message of today’s Gospel is not that we should meet these problems with a naive complacency or indifference. Only a lack of love could do this. Rather, as Christians, we are called to develop such a deep and intimate relationship with God that we are never truly threatened by any outside force or interior emotion. Our faith – our total trust in the power of God to save – is all that we need.

This does not insulate us against pain and loss: the cross is a reality in every Christian’s life. However, as St Paul says, it is the love of Christ which overwhelms us, and only that. Once we belong to him, nothing can come between us and the love of God. Nothing else can touch us, because we are a new creation – not immune to the sufferings of this world (our own or other people’s) – but secure in the knowledge that we have as our Father a God who is able to calm every evil which threatens to destroy us.

We would do well to consider what things we are afraid of and ask God, present among us, to take control of them. He will reassure us with his presence – he may even ask why our faith is frail. But most of all we can pray to gain a deeper knowledge and experience of God’s love for us personally. And we can be a support to others who themselves feel threatened by some crisis and need the presence of a strengthening faith.