



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

Master, Save Us: We Perish

In recent months people seeking information have been given false (faux) or selective news by the media, making it difficult for them to determine what are the facts in specific situations. On the religious side Catholic prelates have differed among themselves about articles of faith, at times approaching heresy in their remarks. Older Catholics wonder if they are reliving the period that followed the Second Vatican Council. Watching these events on a day-to-day basis make the people feel that they are on a roller coaster ride or are being tossed about on a turbulent sea. Saint Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century, preached about how Jesus addressed such a circumstance in Matthew 8, 23-27.

“And when He entered the boat, Christ together with His holy Disciples crossed over the sea or lake of Tiberias, a sudden fierce storm struck the ship, and the waves swelling under the breath of the wind cast the fear of death upon the hearts of the Disciples. For this great disturbance troubled all of them, though they were not ignorant of the ways of the sea, and indeed were long familiar with its storms and dangers. Now their danger became so acute that they filled with a fear they became unable to support, and as there remained no other hope of escaping the danger they awakened the Lord of all power Himself, Who is Christ, with these words: *Master, save us: we perish...*

“It seems to me that all this was arranged with profoundest wisdom, so that they might not ask His aid as soon as the storm had begun to beat against the ship, but only when the danger would be at its highest, that the might of the divine power might thus be the more evident, checking the fierce sea and bringing such a great calm that of a sudden not a vestige of the storm remained. For had it risen while He was awake, either they would not have been afraid, or they would not have besought His help, or they might have thought in a circumstance of this kind that He could do nothing.

“And so He sleeps, leaving them in fear, in which their senses would be sharpened to perceive the significance of what was to come... Before, they had seen others receive favors, while they as yet had received none, and so in this way they were without experience: and since in their peril they would receive help from Him, He permits them for their instruction to be tossed and shaken about by the storm. Fittingly too it was a storm that had taken place, so the miracle would stand out more vividly, and a clear enduring memory of what had happened would remain. For since at first they were certain that they were about to perish, and were then saved, being made aware how great was their danger, they came to learn the greatness of the miracle...

“But as I have said they awaken Him, saying: *Save us, we perish*. Note here with me their faith, and how weak it is. They believe He can save them, yet having little faith they cry: *We perish*. It could not happen that they would perish, since He Who can do all things was with them. Christ Who has power over every creature immediately awakens; forthwith He restrains the storm, checks the fury of the winds, calms their fears, and by this shows that He is God...

“Calming the storm upon the sea, at the same moment He changed the faith of the holy Disciples which had been shaken, with their little ship; changing its wavering to constancy, and He wrought

in them also a great calm: smoothing the waves of their little faith. And so together with the tumult of the waves, He quietens the fear within their souls, chiding them, while He teaches them, that the cause of their fears was not the assault of the tempest, but their own timidity of soul. For He said to them: *Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?*

“But the mind of man is weak and needs help from above, so that he may with courage face the dangers of the way. And this Our Saviour teaches when He says: *Without Me you can do nothing.* And the most wise Paul confesses also: *I can do all things in Him who strengthened me* (Phil. iv.13).

“Then having calmed the storm, and by His command restored the sea to serenity and peace, His Disciples wondering at this extraordinary happening whisper to each other: *What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?* Did they say these words because they knew Him not? Who does not see that this is wholly unlikely? For they knew that Jesus was the Son of God and God; but they were awestricken at the sublimity of the power that was in Him, and at the glory of His divinity. But since He still dwelt among men, and they beheld Him clothed in the flesh, it is for this reason they use these words: *What manner of man is this?* It is as if they said: How great He is! Of what nature? With what power and majesty is He clothed, that He commands the very winds and the sea and they obey Him!

“His manner of acting on this occasion was not that of a suppliant, but of one who rules. This is a great sign; an inspiration to all who hear it. For creation is obedient to every command of Christ...The Lord ...threatened the wind and said to the sea: *Be silent.* And as soon as He had spoken there follows that which He commands, and the sea foaming in angry waves hears the Incarnate Word and ceases from its fury; acknowledging Him Who at the beginning of the world *had gathered together the waters into one place* (Gen. i. 9): and *set a bound which they shall not pass over* (Ps. ciii. 9)...

“The storm was likewise a figure of the things that were later to happen to the Disciples. For the lake signified Judea, upon which arose a great storm of anger among the Jews against our Lord. The Disciples became so fearful that they fled. But the Saviour arose as it were from sleep, and again to the Disciples there came a great calm. And standing in their midst He said: *Peace be to you* (Lk. xxiv. 36).

“In yet another way the sea is for us a figure of the visible world, and the Church is the little ship, and the rowers are the Just, who because they have received the faith have Christ always present with them. And frequently it is assailed by violent storms, and the waves of many persecutions beat against the holy Bark, and countless trials agitate it and the cruelty of unclean spirit rage against it, and fill it with the fear of death.

“But Christ is among His chosen servants, and while in His holy wisdom He permits that they suffer persecution, He seems to sleep. But when the storm is at its fiercest, and those in the Bark can endure no more, then ought we cry out: *Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord* (Ps. xlvi. 23). Without delay He will awaken, and take away all thy fear. He will reprove them that afflict us, and change our mourning into joy, unfolding to us a shining and untroubled sky. For He averts not His Face from those that trust in Him, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Spirit world without end. Amen.” (All quotes taken from the Catena Aurea for the fourth Sunday after Epiphany).

Are we there now?

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