



1) Opening Prayer

Father,
you call your children to
walk in the light of Christ.
Free us from darkness
and keep us in the radiance of your truth.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 8,23-27

Then Jesus got into the boat followed by his disciples. Suddenly a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep. So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are lost!' And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?' And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. They were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'

3) Reflection

- Matthew writes for the converted Jews of the years 70's who felt lost like a boat in the middle of a stormy sea, without the hope of being able to get to the desired port. Jesus seems to be asleep in the boat, and it seems to them that no divine power will come to save them from the persecution. In the face of this desperate and anguished situation, Matthew puts together several episodes of the life of Jesus to help the community discover, in the midst of an apparent absence, the welcoming and powerful presence of Jesus the conqueror who dominates the sea (Mt 8, 23-27), who conquers and casts away the power of evil (Mt 9, 28-34) and who has the power to forgive sins (Mt 9, 1-8). In other words, Matthew wants to communicate hope and to suggest that the communities have no reason to fear. This is the reason for the narration of the storm calmed by Jesus in today's Gospel.
- Matthew 8, 23: The starting point: to enter into the boat. Matthew follows the Gospel of

Mark, but makes it shorter and inserts it in the new outline which he has adopted. In Mark, the day had been very heavy because of the work that they had done. Having finished the discourse of the parables (Mk 4, 3-34), the disciples take Jesus into the boat and he was so tired that he fell asleep on a cushion (Mk 4, 38). Matthew's text is very brief. It only says that Jesus went into the boat and that the disciples accompanied him. Jesus is the Master, the disciples follow the Master.

- Matthew 8, 24-25: The desperate situation: "We are lost!" The Lake of Galilee is close to high mountains. Sometimes, between the cracks of the rocks, the wind blows strongly on the lake causing a sudden storm. Strong wind, agitated sea, the boat full of water! The disciples were experienced fishermen. If they thought that they were about to sink, it meant that the situation was truly dangerous! But Jesus is not aware, and continues to sleep. They cried out: "Save us, Lord, we are lost!" In Matthew the profound sleep of Jesus is not only a sign of tiredness. It is also the expression of the calm trust of Jesus in God. The contrast between the attitude of Jesus and that of the disciples is enormous!

- Matthew 8, 26: The reaction of Jesus: Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith!" Jesus wakes up, not because of the waves, but because of the desperate cry of the disciples. And he turns to them saying: "Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith!" Then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea, because there was no danger. It is like when one arrives to a friend's house, and the dog, at the side of his master, barks very much. But one should not be afraid, because the master is present and controls the situation. The episode of the storm calmed by Jesus evokes the episode, when people, without fear, passed across the water of the sea (Ex 14, 22). Jesus recreates this episode. He recalls the Prophet Isaiah who said to the people: "If you have to go across the water, I will be with you!" (Is 43, 2). The episode of the calmed storm recalls and fulfils the prophecy announced in the Psalm 107:

Those who ploughed the waves in the sea on the ships, plying their trade on the great ocean.

they have seen the works of the Lord, his wonders in the deep.

By his word he raised a storm-wind lashing up towering waves.

Up to the sky then down to the depths; their stomachs were turned to water.

They staggered and reeled like drunkards, and all their skill went under.

They cried out to Yahweh in their distress, he rescued them from their plight.

He reduced the storm to a calm, and all the waters subsided.

He brought them overjoyed at the stillness, to the port where they were bound (Ps 107, 23-30)

- Matthew 8, 27: The fear of the disciples: "Who is this man?" Jesus asks: "Why are you so frightened?" The disciples do not know what to answer. Astounded, they ask themselves: "Whatever kind of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" In spite of the long time that they had lived with Jesus, they still do not know who he is. Jesus seems to be a foreigner for them! Who is this man?

- Who is this man? Who is Jesus for us, for me? This should be the question which urges us to continue to read the Gospel, every day, with the desire always to know better the significance and the importance of the person of Jesus for our life. From this question

comes Christology. It does not come from elevated theological considerations, but from the desire of the first Christians always to find new names and titles to express what Jesus meant for them. There are tens of names, titles and attributes, from that of carpenter to Son of God, which Jesus expresses: Messiah, Christ, Lord, Beloved Son, Holy One of God, Nazarene, Son of Man, Spouse, Son of God, Son of the Most High God, Carpenter, Son of Mary, Prophet, Master, Son of David, Rabboni, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Son, Shepherd, Bread of Life, Resurrection, Light of the world, Way, Truth, Life, King of the Jews, King of Israel, etc. Every name, every image, is an effort to express what Jesus means for them. But a name, no matter how beautiful it is, never succeeds to reveal the mystery of a person, and much less of the person of Jesus. Jesus does not enter into any of these names, in no outline, in no title. He exceeds everything, he is the greatest! He cannot be put into a frame. Love takes up all this, not the mind! Starting from this experience of a love which is alive, the names, the titles and the images receive their full significance. Definitively, who is Jesus for me, for us?

4) Personal Questions

- Which was the agitated sea at the time of Jesus? Which was the agitated sea at the time when Matthew wrote his Gospel? Today, which is the agitated sea for us? Have you ever been on the point of drowning in the agitated waters of the sea of your life? What saved you?
- Who is Jesus for me? Which is the name of Jesus which expresses my faith and my love better?

5) Concluding Prayer

Each age will praise your deeds to the next,
proclaiming your mighty works.
Your renown is the splendour of your glory,
I will ponder the story of your wonders. (Ps 145,4-5)