

On this day 200 years ago (June 19, 1821) after 10 years of serving the people of what was then called the Northwest Territories, Fr. Edward Fenwick was granted both the privilege and the enormous task of overseeing the brand new diocese of Cincinnati as its first bishop. In those days his diocese comprised all of Ohio, about half of Michigan, and all of Indiana. The bishop and handful of priests ministered out of saddlebags to the Catholic communities scattered across the vastness of the diocese. Today we remember those humble beginnings, celebrate all that God has done through the Catholic community in this area since then, and we look forward with hope and prayerful hearts to where the Lord will lead next.

Given the storms of Friday night and Saturday morning, it would seem that the Lord wanted us to be thoroughly washed, and in some cases, scrubbed raw for the occasion. While that may be a humorous quip, one can't help but wonder if there isn't a measure of truth in it, given the timing and the curious way the storms confined themselves almost exclusively to the counties of the Archdiocese here in Ohio, at least the Friday night storms. (I can't speak to the Saturday morning storms as I was in intense and exclusive consultation with my pillow.) Interesting that such a storm happens on the very cusp between our second and third centuries of ministry in this place on earth. Being that we are a people whose faith tradition is littered with portends, signs and prophecies, it would be foolish of us to ignore such things entirely; especially when our Sunday readings just happen to offer for our reflection the story of another group of disciples who found themselves in dire straits in a storm, and what Jesus did and said on that occasion.

On that occasion, the boat full of disciples, most of them apostles, thought Jesus asleep and unaware, even unconcerned that they were about to drown in the storm. In our day, many think that the Lord no longer cares or never did care; perhaps the gods and godly powers of old were only imagined. There are those who think the church is on the brink of total destruction, that we will be utterly ruined by the cancel culture and totally forgotten. In the boat the disciples cried out "Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?" At that the Lord woke up. This is one occasion I can imagine the Lord waking up in a rather grumpy mood. A sidelong look to the disciples that cried out to him told them "Only if I let you perish—and I'm considering the merits of just such a plan." Then, with an exasperated sigh, rising only to one elbow, snaps commands at the wind and sea, "Be quiet! Be still!" Then looking at the disciples as if they were a group of school boys overly upset by their own ghost stories, he asks "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" One could imagine the Lord fixing us with the same look as we dither about clucking that the sky is falling and fretting about our impending destruction, again the look on His face saying, "Only if I allow it."

The disciples in today's Gospel didn't realize it, but they were on the cusp of something enormous; the death and resurrection of Jesus and the beginning of Christianity. The cusp we stand on may not be as momentous, but for us it is no less a mission of missionary discipleship

as those disciples would be given. In the years ahead, it will be our faith, the faith of ordinary Catholic Christians that speaks the Gospel message to a world that more and more does not know Jesus Christ and the salvation he has won for us. As the makeup of the Church shifts even further away from an abundance of priests and religious, the way the Gospel gets proclaimed beyond the parish also has to change. Shaken from complacency and cleansed by the storm, it's time to get out of the boat and tell the world through word, action and way of life all that Jesus Christ has done and continues to do for us. The guy on the TV tells us that this is our shot. Well yes it is, our one shot to be real disciples who proclaim life and love, forgiveness and joy, welcome and resurrection in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Make sure that when the Lord looks at you and asks if you have faith, He sees and answers for Himself, "Yes, yes you do. You have chosen it. I know I can count on you."