

## TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - B

READING I Jb 38:1, 8-11

READING II 2 Cor 5:14-17

GOSPEL Mk 4:35-41

Writing around 500 B.C, the author of Job now grants his principal character's request. Namely, that God speaks and hopefully provides an adequate explanation for Job's condition, which-also summarizes the human condition. Appearing in Old Testament theophanic style (the storm), the Lord God speaks but his speech does not answer Job's question because that question, the explanation for his demise, is irrelevant. God cross-examines Job, employing irony in a series of unanswerable questions. Here the author describes the tumultuous sea as an infant that needed God's tender care. That is, by providing clouds as garments and thick darkness as swaddling bands. At the same time, God ordered the sea to respect the limits imposed by the creator. If Job is incapable of understanding God's care of the sea and the powers of nature, then how will he ever grasp the mystery of God's providence for humanity? Job ultimately is called upon to disavow manipulation and allow for the dimension of mystery. Mystery implies that God's ways are not always human ways.

In this section of Second Corinthians, Paul takes up the foundation of his apostolic work. He begins with his acceptance, in faith, of Christ's saving death. This, however, prompts him to conclude that all died. With Christ's death, a new form of life is now offered to humanity (v 14). This new form of life is not an ego-trip. It is life in the once dead but now risen. It is consequently a life for others (v 15). The recognition of the death-resurrection experience of Jesus means the abolition of all purely human standards: A telling point for the Corinthian community, which tended to regard Christ as only a Spirit-filled wonder worker (v 16). However, for Paul, the crucifixion is significant. It is an act which leads to exaltation. Since Christians share in Christ's exaltation, they are now a new creation. The old order has been destroyed (v 17).

This episode in Mark is basically a miracle story which the author has adopted for his theological purposes. The scene may be divided as follows: (1) The setting (vv. 35-36); (2) The contrast between the tempest and Jesus' peaceful sleep (vv. 37-38a); (3) The disciples' fear and the Master's authoritative word (vv. 38b-39); (4) Jesus' statement of lack of confidence (v. 40); And (5), the impression of awe at Jesus' great work (v. 41).

As a miracle story, the episode assumes an Old Testament understanding of the sea as a force hostile to God and humans. But never-the-less one which God can control. The disciples, therefore, experience great awe since Jesus is performing the work of God (v. 41). The dimension of mystery is present.

At the same time, Mark relates the miracle story to the needs of his post-resurrection community. They sense the absence of the risen Lord and are tempted to lose confidence in the daily struggle of Christian life. Consequently, the Master appears to be sleeping and therefore removed from their real world of concern. V. 40 assures the community that a lack of faith is not the proper response. The miracle story teaches that ongoing faith in the Lord at all times and in all situations alone suffices. Jesus then, is not really asleep.

Maturity means mystery. We usually identify maturity with control. We mature because we are more in control of ourselves and our situation. We often equate growth with manipulation. We grow because we can better handle not only ourselves but, more especially, others. We frequently connect development with knowledge. We develop because we know what and whom to expect. However, we fail to realize that there is a dimension of our lives which calls for awe. Maturity then, means mystery.

Job is in the process of growing. By the end of the theophany in Jb 42:6, the hero acknowledges that he must abandon his quest for absolute control. He must relinquish the pursuit of a satisfying explanation for his condition. Instead, he must practice mystery. He must stand in awe of God's great love for the universe and conclude that God cares for him even more. For Job, God is no longer the predictable celestial administrator. He is an unpredictable yet loving father. In Job, maturity means mystery.

The disciples are in the process of growing. In the original miracle story, they recognize that Jesus performs the work of God. Their question ("Who can this be?" v. 41) implies that there is a dimension to Jesus that eludes their comprehension. For Mark, their maturity probes this question to its final answer in the account of the death and resurrection. The miracle story then becomes a building block in the unfolding mystery of Jesus, which in essence is the mystery of the cross. In Mark, maturity means mystery.

Those who dismiss their prejudices and search for good in all people grow. Those who see tragedy as somehow bound up with a loving God develop. Those who encourage the seemingly ordinary to achieve their full potential mature. Those who shower love upon the world's unlovable grow up. All such people admit the dimension of mystery which surpasses human power to control. For them, maturity means mystery.

Eucharist focuses on the mystery of the cross as the springboard for growth. Eucharist insists that the Father can achieve great things through seemingly inefficient means. Eucharist urges the community to reflect on the chances for growth in their own lives by allowing for mystery. In Eucharist, too, maturity means mystery.