

Christ calms the storm **[279]**

Usual Preparation Prayer.

First Prelude: The History: For the history, we can consider the Biblical text that Ignatius points out: Mt 8:23-27. There are also parallel texts in Mk 4:35-41 and Lk 8:22-25. Jesus gets in the boat, and we are told that “His disciples follow Him.” Suddenly a storm comes up as Jesus is asleep, and they awaken Him. He calms the storm, and reprimands them for their lack of faith.

Second Prelude: The Composition of Place: Here, in our imaginations, we should see the sea of Galilee. One commentator notes that “the Sea of Galilee is small; it is only thirteen miles from north to south and eight miles from east to west at its widest. The Jordan valley makes a deep cleft in the surface of the earth, and the Sea of Galilee is part of that cleft. It is 680 feet below sea level. That gives it a climate which is warm and gracious, but it also creates dangers. On the west side there are hills with valleys and gullies; and, when a cold wind comes from the west, these valleys and gullies act like gigantic funnels. The wind, as it were, becomes compressed in them, and rushes down upon the lake with savage violence and with startling suddenness, so that the calm of one moment can become the raging storm of the next. The storms on the Sea of Galilee combine suddenness and violence in a unique way.”¹

Third Prelude: Petition: Here the petition will be is to ask for light to know intimately my Divine King Who has become a Man for me, and grace to love Him and follow Him in poverty, suffering, and humiliations.

At [279] Ignatius gives three brief points for us to consider.

First Point

While Christ our Lord was asleep in the boat on the sea, a great storm arose.

Second Point

His terrified disciples awaken Him. He reprehends them for the little faith they have, and says to them, “Why are ye afraid, O ye of little faith?”

Third Point

He commanded the wind and sea to cease, and they obeyed, and the sea became calm. And the men marveled, saying, “What manner of man is this that even the

¹ Barclay’s commentary.

winds and the sea obey him?”

As with some of the other contemplations we have considered, Ignatius doesn't give a very detailed contemplation. He gives only the basic steps and then reminds us to follow the same model as we did before: to *see* the people, then to *hear* the people, then to *examine what they are doing*, each time gathering some fruit for my life.

As we have done for the other meditations, we can consider, first, a little background to what Ignatius is doing here, and then, second, some elements to help us contemplate and consider Christ so as to imitate Him better.

We've already mentioned the physical layout of the sea of Galilee. Commenting on the parallel text in Mark, Fr. Ricciotti comments that “the departure seems to have been sudden and hurried.” It's interesting that we are told that “Jesus got in the boat, and His disciples followed Him.” Christ, with His divine knowledge, would've known that a storm was coming, and yet He went ahead anyways. In other words, He knew perfectly well what was going to happen, and how He was going to solve the problem. The disciples didn't know that, but they should have known Jesus.

“The crossing is only a matter of a few miles, but it can be dangerous, especially toward nightfall, as in this case, because cold winds come tumbling suddenly down from the snowy heights of Hermon and blow up storms which are extremely violent for that lake and for the frail craft which sail it. This is what happened that evening. Jesus, wearied from the long, laborious day, lay down in the stern of the boat and went to sleep. . . . Suddenly a violent gale strikes the lake and before long Jesus' boat begins to [take on] water and is in danger of sinking. Its crew try to maneuverer it to safety but all in vain.”²

“In less than half an hour the placid sunshine had become a raging storm. That is what Jesus and his disciples encountered. The words in the Greek are very vivid. The storm is called a *seismos*, which is the word for an earthquake. The waves were so high that the boat was *hidden* (*kaluplesthai*) in the trough as the crest of the waves towered over them. Jesus was asleep. (If we read the narrative in Mk 4:1 and 35, we see that before they had set out he had been using the boat as a pulpit to address the people and no doubt he was exhausted).

“Jesus lies fast asleep in the little boat on Galilee's sea, seeming entirely oblivious of all that is happening about him; one could, in the darkness, easily mistake him for a coil of rope or a folded sail lying there. The disciples cannot understand how he can

² *Life of Christ*, 346.

sleep through the raging fury of the wind and sea and they hesitate between their desire not to disturb him and their terror of the impending disaster, between their respect for the Master and their instinctive habit of turning confidently to Him for help. But after a little they are convinced they cannot hesitate any longer. They simply have to waken and warn him so that he may somehow save himself as well.” In their moment of terror the disciples awoke him, and the storm became a calm. The parallel texts emphasize the suddenness of the calm; everything settled down right away. If you are familiar with the water and the way that storms arise, you know that, even after the worst of the storm passes, it still takes time for the water to settle down. However, we see Christ’s power in that, as soon as He commands, suddenly everything becomes peaceful.

Wherever Jesus is the storms of life become a calm. It means that in the presence of Jesus the most terrible of tempests turns to peace.

When the cold, bleak wind of sorrow blows, there is calm and comfort in the presence of Jesus Christ. When the hot blast of passion blows, there is peace and security in the presence of Jesus Christ. When the storms of doubt seek to uproot the very foundations of the faith, there is a steady safety in the presence of Jesus Christ. In every storm that shakes the human heart there is peace with Jesus Christ. The lesson of this story is that when the storms of life shake our souls Jesus Christ is there, and in his presence the raging of the storm turns to the peace that no storm can ever take away.

The foundation of this peace, however, is to be confident in Christ. Fr. Jean d’Elbee explains this when he writes, “What does Jesus lament most when He is with His Apostles? Their lack of confidence. ‘Men of little faith!’ This is the main reproach He makes to them. He does not say to them, ‘Men of no character, men without energy, without discipline. No, He says, ‘Men of little faith!’

Jesus was crossing the lake of Tiberias in a boat with His disciples. He was asleep in the stern. A great windstorm blew up, and the waves poured into the boat so that it was already filled. Seized with anguish, the disciples awakened Jesus: ‘Lord, save us; we are perishing!’ And rising up, He reprimands the wind and says to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind abated and there was a great calm’ Then, turning to His Apostles, He asks, ‘Where is your faith?’ I can hear Jesus scolding them with gentleness, but with pain, too: ‘Why is this? I was in the boat with you – I slept, but I was there – and you were afraid; you were terrified. You doubted either my omnipotence or my love. Do you not know after all who I am, and do you not know after all with what tenderness my Heart watches over you continually?’ It is truly such doubt that pains and offends Him most.

But you see, we have lost so completely the notion of the entire confidence that He expects of us, that we sometimes make a prayer of the words for which He reproached His Apostles: 'Lord, save us; we are perishing!'

This is not how we should pray, but rather, 'With you, Jesus, I cannot perish; You are always in the boat with me; what have I to fear? You may sleep; I shall not awaken you. My poor nature will tremble, oh yes! But with all my will I shall remain in peace in the midst of the storm, confident in You.'

In hours of anguish, think of the Divine Master calming the violent storm with one word. This will be a tremendous source of comfort for you as you wait – peacefully – for Him to waken.

The great tempest is what our sins stir up in our souls. It is there that Jesus must arise in order that 'a great calm may descend.'"³

So, how can we not wake Jesus, and allow ourselves to remain calm in the midst of troubles? The answer lies in *spiritual childhood*, becoming little children before God. "[Spiritual childhood] involves, above all, the recognition of our own nothingness. To remain a child, says St. Therese: 'is to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything from its father; it is to be disquieted about nothing. . . . To be little is not attributing to oneself the virtues that one practices, believing oneself capable of anything, but to recognize that God places this treasure in the hands of His little child to be used when necessary; but it remains always God's treasure.'

Remaining a child involves maintaining a spirit of poverty; to be poor is the most priceless treasure because one has compassion and mercy on a child because of his lack of strength. And so she frequently repeats [and we have three quotes from her]: 'In the case of children, they will be judged with extreme sweetness'; 'Little children are not damned'; 'Even among the poor, they give the child what is necessary, but as soon as he grows up, his father no longer wants to feed him.'" This, too, is a point that Fr. Kentenich makes: especially in poor families, where it seems that the parents have nothing, somehow, almost miraculously, the parents make food appear. The child probably isn't even aware of this, but, even in the worst circumstances, somehow the parents manage to provide.

In *Notes about Confidence*, Fr. Fuentes says, "The greatest enemy of this spiritual childhood is to abandon our poverty due to attachment to earthly goods [recall that *earthly goods* doesn't just mean things like money or cars or fancy houses, but

³ *I believe in Love*, 40-41.

anything that isn't God, that could be found apart from Him or separated from Him in some way], that is, due to the loss of what St. Ignatius calls 'indifference.' Spiritual childhood implies a total detachment, even of all that could be called 'extraordinary': [Again, he gives some quotes from the Little Flower]: 'I don't have any desire to see God here on earth. And yet I love Him! I also love the Blessed Virgin very much, and the saints, and I don't desire to see them. [I prefer to live by faith].'

It consists in loving and wanting to suffer for God: 'Sanctity does not consist in saying beautiful things, it does not even consist in thinking them, in feeling them! It consists in suffering and suffering everything.'

'It was far from bringing me any consolations since the most absolute aridity and almost total abandonment were my lot. Jesus was sleeping as usual in my little boat; ah! I see very well how rarely souls allow Him to sleep peacefully within them. Jesus is so fatigued with always having to take the initiative and to attend to others that He hastens to take advantage of the repose I offer to Him. He will undoubtedly awaken before my great eternal retreat, but instead of being troubled about it this only gives me extreme pleasure.'

This childlike abandonment to God does not imply passivity but rather completely the opposite, a great strength to practice a stripping of self and to not place obstacles to the action of God. It should not seem strange to us, because of this, that Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face – her sister Celine – gave evidence in the process of beatification that the characteristic virtue of the saint was *fortitude*. Thus, from the outside, she harnessed the temperament of this great saint not as a 'sweet child' but as a 'strong woman.'"

We can conclude with a poem of Bl. Joseph Kentenich, which reminds us that our attitude must be like that of children who trust without reserve in their father:

*Though storms may rage
And winds may howl
And lightning strike again,
I think as does the mariner's child:
My Father is at the helm!*

[Colloquy]: Ignatius tells us to end with the colloquy used for the Three Classes of Men, which is the same as the one used for Two Standards.

Threefold Colloquy:

A colloquy should be addressed to our Lady, asking her to obtain for me from her Son and Lord the grace to be received under His standard, first in the highest spiritual poverty, and should the Divine Majesty be pleased thereby, and deign to choose and accept me, even in actual poverty; secondly, in bearing insults and wrongs, thereby to imitate Him better, provided only I can suffer these without sin on the part of another, and without offense of the Divine Majesty. Then I will say the Hail Mary.

Second Colloquy: This will be to ask her Son to obtain the same favors for me from the Father. Then I will say, Soul of Christ.

Third Colloquy: This will be to beg the Father to grant me the same graces. Then I will say the Our Father.

[157] Note: It should be noted that when we feel an attachment opposed to actual poverty or a repugnance to it, when we are not indifferent to poverty and riches, it will be very helpful in order to overcome the inordinate attachment, even though corrupt nature rebel against it, to beg our Lord in the colloquies to choose us to serve Him in actual poverty. We should insist that we desire it, beg for it, plead for it, provided, of course, that it be for the service and praise of the Divine Goodness.