

“The Faith Boat”

How many of us have been on a cruise ship? I have only been on a smaller one. How many of us have been on a power boat on the lake? How about a canoe? Have you been on a kayak? Living on the Watershops Pond or Lake Massasoit has allowed us to be on the water numerous times. We received a canoe as a wedding gift and own a couple of kayaks. Given the size of the pond, we can only go so far, but I remember it being a big deal the first time we went under the bridge that connects Roosevelt Ave over the pond.

We had a Yorkshire terrier, Lilly, who we learned rather quickly was scared half to death of being in the canoe. She actually climbed up my neck and wanted to sit on my head. It was as far away as she could get. She was afraid actually to be in the boat. Bob, the Maltese poodle, was usually braver but he was not a fan and thought he should sit on my lap the whole time. I could relate to Lilly because it took me some time to agree to go out in the canoe.

If you were not raised to be on a watercraft the idea of stepping into any kind of smaller boat can be a bit unnerving. The boat tends to

move and you want to grab onto something for support. That was how I felt when we first got our boat. I was very concerned about first getting into the boat and then finally being seated. Now, I know that this is different than a cruise ship where you don't necessarily feel anything move for a while. But, sometimes, a change is good and you have to get yourself on the boat.

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus and the disciples needed to get out of the area after he had cured someone on the Sabbath. Remember how angry the Pharisees were? So, they left. Then, as they were walking, we had the telling of parables, such as the Mustard Seed from last week. Even though the author of Mark doesn't tell us, they were probably walking towards the Sea of Galilee and ready to get on the fishing boats. No one tells us if Jesus was nervous about being on a boat. I'd say it could be the opposite since he fell asleep. I don't know about you, but I cannot fall asleep when I am nervous or worried about someone.

Well, the storm hit and Jesus stayed asleep. The apostles were a bit unnerved and woke him. As Jesus calmed the storm and then the apostles, he asked the question, "Are you still without faith?" I'd like to

take the side of the apostles for just a moment. Maybe Jesus was just a bit grumpy as he had been sleeping. I know that I don't like it when someone wakes me up from a nap. They at least had enough faith in Jesus that they knew that he could do something about the storm. You may think that I am being a bit blasphemous by calling Jesus grumpy. Remember, he was also a person. We are left with the concept of this act of faith.

We have talked about the original audience for Mark's Gospel. Our scholars tell us that they were persecuted Christians in Rome, many of whom were waiting to be fed to lions in the Coliseum. They were reminded to hold their faith close as they suffered because the reward would be eternal life in Heaven. They did have the opportunity to recant or renounce their faith before they were sentenced to death. Those early Christians may have responded out loud, "Yes, I have faith! I can face this pending storm."

What about us here today in 2024? We face all kinds of difficulties and storms that wage in all of our lives. But, we still "get on the boat" or make the decisions we have to make. That could be the hardest

thing—getting on that boat. Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis, one of the speakers I heard at the Festival of Homiletics wrote, “Getting on that boat could be an act of faith all on its own.” The next five to ten years are going to be filled with changes that will have us say, “You mean THIS is going to happen NOW to my body?” Or “You want me to do what, Lord?”

Embrace what is going to come your way. Think of it this way: it is not “The Love Boat” but “The Faith Boat.” Get on that faith boat and take the journey to some new place, that presents a challenge, or even makes you feel a little bit uncomfortable. That is the first act of faith. The next act of faith could be that we believe that wherever you are going to go, Jesus is going to be with you. We can certainly trust that our faith in Jesus will help to still any storm we encounter.

Let us spend some time to listen this summer and pray for enough faith that will allow you to answer Jesus’ invitation to “Come, follow Me.” The act of faith IS taking Jesus’ invitation to heart. Get in the boat. Go with God/Jesus/Holy Spirit. The act of faith can also be believing that another side is not only possible but also essential for us to be true followers. The Faith Boat: Come aboard we’re expecting you...