

Gospel for 9 January: Confronting Difficulties

Gospel for January 9th, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 6:22-27*)

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about

the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."

Commentary

Many of our Lord's teachings take place around the lake. Over time, the disciples will understand that what happens there is an allegory of human life. And that life must be faced, even if one sees oneself as without strength. The Gospel for today's Mass tells us that one of the greatest difficulties we can encounter on the path of life is the hardness of our own heart; and that

therein lies the key to understanding what happens to us and being able to integrate it into the whole of our existence.

The Fathers of the Church, when commenting on this passage, do not limit themselves to emphasizing the fatigue caused by rowing against the wind. For them, the waves are also an image of pride and arrogance. Life's obstacles do not only come from outside; they are also found within one's heart. What enables a person to navigate without difficulties is humility. Openness of heart and trust in God give us a deeper understanding of whatever happens to us.

To prevent the hardening of our heart is partly in our own hands. Life certainly presents us with many challenges. And we are impacted by the evil caused by others. But we can choose whether to close in on

ourselves or to strive to assist those around us, knowing that we all confront many trials. We are not the only recipients of the world's evil. We are not the only ones who have obstacles, suffering and limitations to overcome. And it is this readiness to try to assist others that opens our heart and helps us walk through life with joy, even in the midst of difficulties.

Jesus is watching over us. And he is continually present to us, although sometimes we don't recognize him. One of the ways we encounter him is when we get out of ourselves and try to help the people around us who are in need of consolation, material help, guidance, the testimony of our joyful and sincere faith. Whoever opens their heart in this way casts out every form of fear. For fear stems from feeling alone, and whoever welcomes their neighbor welcomes

Christ into their life and is never alone.

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