Reflection and closing prayer for Sunday 20th - The third Sunday after Trinity (also known as ‘Proper 7), Year B... also Fathers’ day and World Refugee Day!

Collect:

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this, heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings for today: Job 38:1-11 and Mark 4:35-41

Reflection on Mark 4.35-41:

Jesus’ teaching often involved using those places and situations where there are challenges to be faced, and deep choices to be made. In today’s gospel the teaching is based around the sea and the wind and waves that threaten our very life. Tossed about in a squall on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples, experienced fishmen though they are, are terrified and yet Jesus is said to be asleep, apparently comfortable and unconcerned, on a cushion in the stern of the boat.

We have all heard today’s gospel story many times - and like so many gospel stories it’s easy to make assumptions about what this one is about and so miss the real point, because this is not just about “*Jesus being shown to have divine powers so we must worship him...”* It's about disciples of Jesus and how we all experience fear, anxiety, doubt, concern, disappointment, irritability, resentment, outrage ..and how we feel when God seems not to care, or even to know about them.

It's about what American poet Robert Bly calls “The Long Black Bag” we drag behind us; or what Jung termed our personal “Shadow” - the place where everything we have forgotten, denied, rejected, or not yet discovered, goes to live

This reading is about what the disciples learned as a result of this episode: confronting their doubts about God, their anger with God, and the fear of God’s wrath at their having these feelings - yet finding something through these things and beyond them, that actually strengthened their trust in God.

The teaching today is about forgiving ourselves for our resentment and lack of trust - and about learning that these things may test our faith but are also opportunities to find out that God’s love survives our doubts and resentments and rages. When they woke Jesus and said ‘Teacher, don’t you care that we are going to die?’ he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!' It was the elements, not the disciples that he rebuked - to them he gave a gentle encouragement, “Why are you afraid? have you still no faith?” (“Don’t you know yet that you can always trust me?”)

It’s about even the winds and waves of our crazy mixed up feelings, the seas that we all fear will engulf us – be it vulnerability, powerlessness, criticism, failure, weakness, resentment, guilt, rage and so on, all actually being what American Franciscan

Fr Richard Rohr calls ‘Necessary Negativities’ which, however frightening or unlikely-seeming, can all be means of strengthening our faith, if that is something we want, and if we allow them to do so. As writer *Toko-pa Turner* writes, “*You always have the choice - to turn away, or to look for redemption - in the shadows.”*

Closing Prayer:

Eternal God, comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken, you bring life and hope to your people: teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,
that all the world may acknowledge your kingdom of love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.