



## VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr. Luciano Alimandi - The presence of Jesus

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "Then he got into the boat followed by his disciples. Suddenly a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep. So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are lost!' And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?' And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm?" (Mt 8, 23-27). The calming of the storm is one of the most impressive of Jesus' miracles. Perhaps what is so striking is that we can all identify ourselves with the situation described by the Synoptics. Let us reflect: as Christians do we not see life as a long voyage towards eternity, a boat sailing on the sea of time, amidst storms which often come unexpectedly, filling us with fear? If we truly believe that Jesus is in our boat, should this not fill us with inalterable calm, and firm conviction that, as St Paul says, "We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good." (Rom 8, 28).

How many lessons are to be learned from the Gospel of the 'calming of the tempest'! The storms of life, especially those which appear suddenly, like the ocean waves, for the Christian are an opportunity to "rest" upon the heart of Jesus. It is wonderful to listen to reflections of children on Gospel stories. The theological depth of a child's answers to Gospel passages can be a lesson for adults.

A nine year old boy at an elementary school in Ostia (Rome) commented the above mentioned Gospel passage to his school companions as follows: "the Apostles, it is true, were frightened, but that was because they did not do what Jesus did. Jesus was sleeping because he was resting on the heart of his Father. They were not resting on the heart of Jesus and so they were frightened. But how could the poor Apostles rest on the heart of Jesus, if they did not know him well enough?"

Hearing these words one can only exclaim: "I bless you Lord because you reveal these things...to the little ones" (Mt 11, 25)! In fact the real reason for the Apostles' fear, revealed in the Gospel is their little faith; but why was their faith so weak? Because they were not yet familiar with the plans of Jesus: "Whatever kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

Whereas the little boy understood, thanks to the prompting of the Holy Spirit!

We also put too little trust in Jesus because we do not know him well enough. If we knew him better then our faith would be stronger, it would be founded on the living knowledge of God's mysterious presence in our life. St Peter speaks often of the importance of this knowledge: "By his divine power, he has lavished on us all the things we need for life and for true devotion, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Pt. 1,3).

But knowledge and love demand attention and time for the Lord! When we are distracted by things, people, events, when only in appearance we have "put out to sea" for Jesus, because we are still anchored in the harbour of our human certainties and illusions, even the smallest thing can shake our weak faith.

Faith to be strong, must be rooted in deep knowledge of Christ; it is not enough to hear someone speak about him or to speak about him, faith must be lived, day after day. It must grow deeper and deeper. How many saints don Bosco, Ignatius of Loyola ... insisted for this reason on the importance of daily meditation on the mysteries of Jesus! Returning to the above mentioned Gospel passage we might think that it was not a bad idea of the apostles to 'awaken' Jesus, because he then calmed the storm. But more than their frightened prayer, we should pay attention to the words of Jesus: "why are you afraid, men of little faith?"

These words apply to us too. If assimilated in the faith these words can chase any fear which rises in our hearts in the face of the unknown, the unforeseen, the indomitable... anything which seems to "swamp" and "drown" us. Even if Jesus "sleeps", his presence changes our life radically, if we believe! The same trial, borne with faith in Jesus, even if it lasts, instead of plunging the believer into a chasm of anxiety and desperation purifies and

sanctifies: “ so that the worth of your faith, more valuable than gold, which is perishable even if it has been tested by fire, may be proved-to your praise and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Pt 1, 7).

In the Tabernacle Jesus is there, like One who sleeps, but his almighty power never sleeps, it fills the adoring heart with love and peace calming the 'waves' of evil. Adoring the Lord Jesus, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Christian experiences that, even if He 'sleeps' He governs the world and governs our heart! (Agenzia Fides 26/11/2008)