

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 22, 2012

We have all seen dramatic pictures of the sinking of the Costa cruise liner.

What a disaster! Its passengers and crew's suffering was increased by having no one at the helm. The ship's captain abandoned ship. There was no one on the bridge to issue commands that would point in any particular direction.

I am a veteran of cruise lines and I am fortunate to usually travel on Crystal. Crystal is not one of the lines controlled by the super conglomerate Carnival Industries. On Crystal, a lifeboat drill is mandatory before every sailing. And on the days when the ship is in port, the crew often practice different fire and lifeboat drills.

And at the helm is a captain who is responsible to the passengers and twice a day gives a report to all the passengers from the bridge.

This image of a captain pointing the way ahead is appropriate on this Sunday when Jesus chooses seamen (they did move about in boats,) and points them in a clear direction.

Jesus is never wishy-washy, never indecisive:

*"This is the time of fulfillment!
The Kingdom of God is at hand!
Repent and believe in the Gospel (Good News!)"*

And to the seafarers around him, he announces:

"Come after me and I will make you fishers of men!"

The Kingdom of God is at the core of the message of Jesus. The Kingdom of God is enigmatic. It is now, but not yet; it is a seed, but it will be a tree later on.

But for his disciples in every age it is to be implemented as best we can until its final fulfillment.

We are not seamen adrift on a life raft. Our Church has a nickname; "the barque of Peter".

It pitches, and bobs, and sometimes seems about to sink, but somehow it resumes the direction given by Jesus ... the direction being the kingdom of God, which really means God's way of doing things.

So for us THIS is our day of fulfillment — not yesterday — not tomorrow — but today. This is the urgent message of Jesus. Eckhart Tolle has written an insightful book about the NOW being the only existing reality in our lives.

I think in some way, Jesus was trying to express the core of this truth. Don't fret over yesterday. Don't procrastinate and say, I will do this tomorrow. NOW is the time of fulfillment.

People in AA know this. They ask for the grace just to get through the current day without drinking.

How important is THE NOW! Saturday I talked to my friend Theresa. I wish I could have said more. Twelve hours later, she suffered a fall and is now on life support. God spare her! But how true is the old French quotation:

"We are all wayfarers and sojourners and we have too little time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us!"

So what might we take out of today's gospel?

A sense of urgency.

A belief that Jesus points us in the right direction.

A sense of joy that his message is indeed Good News!

And a firm belief that he is our captain who will never abandon us!

Breakfast Talk: How important is it that a captain remain on the bridge of his afflicted ship?

Personal Reflection: Which of these is most needed by me?

A sense of urgency?

A belief that Jesus points us in the right direction?

A sense of joy that his message is indeed Good News?

A firm belief that he is my captain who will never abandon me?