

**Reflection on the Gospel-12th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B
(Mark 4:35-41)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Today's gospel story looks back to the parables in the first part of the chapter and to the crowds that heard them. The story also looks forward as it marks the beginning of the second major section of Mark's gospel (4:35-8:21), a section that seems to be structured around a number of crossings of the lake or Sea of Galilee. Jesus' decision to move with his disciples out of familiar territory is deliberate: "Let us go across to the other side." The crossing itself is difficult, as is the challenge that confronts them on the other side of the lake. From the disciples' perspective, the seeming indifference of the sleeping Jesus is even more disturbing than the storm that threatens their safe crossing: "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus demonstrates that he does indeed care. From his perspective, the problem is with the fear in their hearts, a fear that is grounded in their lack of faith: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

In the context of this Markan story, Jesus is like the sower in the parable (4:27-28) who goes to sleep and trusts that the seed will sprout and grow and bear fruit-which it does. Within a first-century Jewish context, Jesus' ability to "rebuke" the storm is a sign of divine power. In the Psalms, for instance, the God of Israel is the one who stills the roaring of the seas (Psalm 65:5) and controls the creatures that inhabit the waters (Psalm 89:9). Today's first reading has insisted that God commands the sea and all of its moods. In the Book of Job, God the Birthing Mother presents Job with a series of rhetorical questions, reminding him and us that, while the sea may be threatening, it is God's new born infant, wrapped in God's swaddling clothes of darkness and cloud (Job 38).

We read Mark's little story against the backdrop of the Hebrew Scriptures. We might also read it in light of contemporary science and find within it a call to consider how our species respects or fails to respect and to nurture the fruit of God's womb, the cosmos. The story of the storm at sea is most certainly not an invitation to be complacent about the extreme weather events on our planet, trusting in God that all will be well. While such terrifying events can derive from the movement of tectonic plates over which we have no control, they can also derive from or be exacerbated by excessive carbon and methane emissions. We pollute the atmosphere and make the seas to rise at our peril. Trust in God may involve relinquishing vested interests and engaging the processes that are designed to reverse the effects of the human-induced climate crisis. As nations begin to embrace more ambitious climate action, we have some reason to hope. Our hope is grounded in God who moves us to action.