

# Pastor's letter

June 21, 2009

Dear parishioner,

We have returned to normality, that is to say, that with this Sunday's liturgy we are back to the ordinary time in the church calendar, without any particular feast or celebration.

With the feasts of the Ascension, the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit and the Corpus Domini, perhaps we went a bit far from the reality of every day. This consideration may apply only to me since my previous Sunday reflections have dealt with human aspects versus godly or superhuman aspects.

This Sunday's Gospel seems to want to shake us and say: "Wake up. See that you are not in Heaven yet. Please, go back to Earth. Walk steadfast."

*"A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'"* (Mark 4: 37-38)

Strange that Jesus sleeps undisturbed in the middle of a storm. His disciples fight against the wind to save themselves and the boat, while Jesus sleeps deeply in the stern of the boat.

It is evident that the sleeping of Jesus is not a causal act. Rather, it has a purpose, to teach something to His disciples. He wants to test their faith in difficult moments.

To write or to talk about it is simple, but the fear of the disciples was true. It was human, natural. Probably all of us, were we to find ourselves in their place, would have had the same reactions.

So we could ask ourselves, "Where is the logic in the behavior of Jesus, why does He reproach these poor fishermen terrorized by the fury of the sea?"

*"He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm. Jesus said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'"* (Mark 4: 39-40)

If we try to read this episode from Jesus' point of view, not that of His disciples, it might be easier for us to understand the pedagogic logic of Jesus.

In the Gospel of Mark this episode has put to the beginning of the public life of Jesus, even though He was already well known for his many miracles. He had restored to health an epileptic (someone said to be possessed by the devil). He had cured the paralytic who had been lowered from a rooftop and forgiven his sins. Blinds, lames and innumerable others who were sick, had gone to Him and had received a miracle.

From all these numerous miracles, which the disciples had assisted, they had come to know Jesus, or at least understand that He was not like others. Therefore, following the logic of Jesus they should have had trust in Him, have faith in Him.

His reproach implies that we too, must not be afraid of storms that others instigate in us or in others around us, because He does not abandon those who trust Him. The foremost

teaching in today's Gospel is that faith is a necessity.

Some of you will smile and think: "Wow! How smart Father Luciano is! I already know that the main topic of this Gospel is faith. But what happens to my faith if everything turns bad? Can it happen that you lose it? No?"

Yes, It is true that there are moments in our lives when we get the impression we are sinking or are overwhelmed from pain or from our own mistakes. The wish to die, to disappear from the face of the earth, to never have been born, they can appear. A lot of times we ask ourselves, "Where has God gone? Has He forgotten me? Doesn't He have any interest in me any longer?"

I don't believe that in the attitude of Jesus there is an intention to hurt us for losing faith in Him. It would be a contradiction with what He is. Instead, I see in the attitude of Jesus a sort of encouragement to make good use of our strengths. I believe that God loves me, but I don't measure the greatness of His Love for me from the number of the problems that are resolved around me, but from the courage and strength that He gives me to face them.

I see in the attitude of Jesus an invitation to trust in Him and to have the internal calm, without using particular stratagems but to be certain that He is always with us.

In these last few years a new psychological therapy has come to light that seems destined to become successful because it is very practical, relatively simple, not requiring the use of an expensive psychologist. The psychological therapy of which I talk about is called Positive Psychology. The Positive Psychology can be appropriate for those people that don't have major psychic problems. It is based on the positive experiences that a person has experimented in the past, recalling moments of comfort, joy, pleasure, hope, and satisfactions. One then learns to use the same positive feelings in every circumstance of his life, to discover the strong points in himself and to fully stimulate the potentialities not yet expressed, consequently developing into a fully confident personality.

I wondered. "Didn't this Positive Psychology exist already under another name? Was its name not Faith? But doesn't the Faith of which Jesus speaks to me perhaps have the same dynamics as the Positive Psychology? Doesn't the Faith of which Jesus speaks, is found in the beautiful experiences that we have with Him?"

You see, sometimes it is easy for others to confuse us with ideas and offerings of "tools" for meaningful turns, when we have already found our meaningful "tools" in our faith in God.

But the "tools" that God offers us, to make our life meaningful, don't enter in us "automatically". God's "tools" can only work in us if we grant Him permission to do so.

Faith asks for internal availability, as every psychological therapy. Faith is the free and generous opening to the teachings of God.

The walk toward an adult Faith asks that between our fears and distrust we open the road for a **positive insertion** of His teachings within us.

Peace, Father Luciano