

**HOMILY**  
**June 25, 2006**

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Victor Hugo, who is famous for his novels *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Miserables*, also wrote a story called *Ninety-Three*. It tells of a ship caught in a dangerous storm on the high seas. At the height of the storm, the frightened sailors heard a terrible crashing noise below the deck. They knew at once that the new noise came from a cannon, part of the ship's cargo that had broken loose. It was moving back and forth with the swaying of the ship, crashing into the side of the ship with a terrible impact. Knowing that it could cause the ship to sink, two brave sailors volunteered to make the dangerous attempt to retie the loose cannon. They knew the danger of a shipwreck from the cannon was greater than the fury of the storm.

That is so much like life. Storms of life may blow upon us, but it is not these exterior storms that pose the greatest danger. The furious storm outside may be overwhelming, but what is going on inside can pose the greater threat to our lives. If we were to look inside ourselves at this moment, what would we find? Calm waters of serenity, peace and contentment, joy and hope; or is there a storm raging within—the storm of fear and anxiety—fear of rejection, fear of being abandoned, fear of failure, fear of separation or loss, fear of the unknown? Like President Franklin D. Roosevelt told the American people, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” Our only hope lies in conquering that wild enemy.

That's what the Disciples learned this day on the Sea of Galilee. They thought the danger lay outside the boat. They would soon learn that the real danger lay within the boat, within their own hearts. In a word, they lacked faith; and without faith, their lives were at risk to the storms that would inevitably come. And come they did. And come they will.

So what can we learn from this boat ride in the storms? Well, basically, we need faith. Did you know that the directive “be not afraid” is found in the Bible three hundred sixty-five times? The story is told of old Bishop Warren Chandler. As he lay on this deathbed, a friend inquired as to whether or not he was afraid. “Please

tell me frankly,” he said, “do you fear crossing over the River of Death?” “Why should I be afraid?” the good Bishop replied. “I belong to a father who owns the land on both sides of the river.” In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

Today’s message from God’s Word wants you to know that God cares if you are immobilized by some fear in your life. God cares because that fear is intruding upon his destiny for you. Fear is useless; what is needed is trust!

There was a woman who was well known for her simple faith and great calm in the midst of many trials. Another woman, who never met her but had heard of her, came to visit one day. “I must find out the secret of her calm, happy life.” As she met her she said, “So you are the woman with the great faith I’ve heard so much about.” “No” came the reply. “I am not the woman with the great faith, but I am the woman with the little faith in the great God. Can you say the same?” In a way she was not afraid, because she realized that in the midst of whatever storm God was in the boat with her. Have you made room to invite God into your boat?

A little girl was about to undergo a dangerous operation. Just before the doctor administered the anesthetic, he said, “Before we can make you well, we must put you to sleep.” The little girl responded, “Oh, if you are going to put me to sleep, then I must say my prayers first.” She founded her hands, closed her eyes, and said,

*Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.  
And this I ask for Jesus’ sake.      Amen*

Later on, the surgeon admitted that he prayed that prayer that night for the first time in thirty years.

Like the surgeon, we too can take this lesson home. No matter what may rage and blow around us, we need not fear. God is in the boat with us. Does that mean clear sailing from now on? *Sometimes the Lord calms the storm—but keep in mind, sometimes he lets the storm rage and he calms his child.*

So, will you and I have clear skies forever as the T.V. ministers assure you? Probably not. Well, you say, it doesn't sound as though the promise that is given is that great. But it's this promise that got Job through his ordeals and made him become a believer. It's what got the Jews, our ancestors, through the wilderness. It's what got Mary through her pregnancy. It's what got Jesus through the crucifixion and, friends, it will be sufficient to get you through the night.

So tonight, remember the little girl who folded her hands and closed her eyes and said:

*Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.  
And this I ask for Jesus' sake.      Amen*