

## XII ORDINARY TIME– 20th June 2021

### WHO THEN IS THIS THAT EVEN THE WIND AND THE SEA OBEY HIM? Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

#### Mark 4,35-41

*On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

In today's Gospel, the evangelist Mark reflects the tensions of the early church. In the Acts of the apostles in chapter 20 we read and a lamentation by Paul, Saint Paul, who says "... *the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.*" ( Acts 20. 23) And it's true, but why? Because he doesn't do what the Holy Spirit told him to do. Jesus had chosen Paul to be the light of the people, that is, of the gentiles , Paul had to bring the good news to them, but he, who has always remained a Pharisee, goes first to the synagogue in every city and tries to convince the Jews. Hence the contrasts and as he says, "... *imprisonment and afflictions await me.*"

This attitude of his caused the break with the evangelist Mark that he had brought with him on the first trip. But then Mark, Mark is the evangelist of the universal message, the only evangelist in whom the term "*law*" never appears, he is the evangelist who says that God has declared all food pure, thus the contrary into what is in the book of Leviticus, well, Marco does not agree with him. He is for a universal message to the gentiles and not only towards the Jews, there is a break and Paul was so offended and did not want Marco with him anymore. Then, only at the end of his existence he, in Rome, in captivity, when once again he tried to summon the Jews of Rome and saw the failure, Paul finally recognizes, saying "*The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:..*" he had said it before but it needed experience to understand it. "*.....For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes.....*" ( Acts 28. 25-27)

Then Paul makes the decision and says "*Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.*" ( Acts 28,28) And the book of Acts ends saying that Paul taught "*without hindrance*".

Well, this tension is reflected in today's Gospel passage; it is Mark chapter 4 known as 'the calming of the storm'. Jesus says to his disciples "*Let us go across to the other side*"

the other side meant the land of the gentiles and the disciples do not want to know, their only thought is that of Israel. And then here, when they are on the lake, a big storm rises with a strong wind, what is this wind? It is the spirit of the disciples who do not intend go to the gentiles. It seems strange that in this great storm the only one who does not realize it is Jesus, who the evangelist says that he sleeps, because this tension does not concern him, he is for the opening to the gentiles.

Then there is the intervention of Jesus who treats the wind with the same terms with which he treats impure, spirits he says "*Peace! Be still!*" he scolds. What is this impure spirit? It is the spirit of the disciples, of the supremacy of Israel, the gentiles must be dominated, but they must not be served, this the disciples do not want to understand and a lot of time will pass. The fact is that the conclusion reached by the disciples of Jesus, they ask themselves, given that Jesus commands the sea and who commands the sea in the Bible is only God, they ask themselves "*Who then is this,...*" They are with Jesus, they follow him, they accompany him, but they have not understood and, the irony of Mark, the only one who in this gospel will understand who Jesus is. Who will it be? Just a gentile ; those to whom the disciples do not want to go, it will be one of them who will say at the conclusion of the Gospel "*Truly he is the son of God*"