

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“A violent squall came up (on the Sea of Galilee) and waves were breaking over their boat. Jesus was in the stern asleep on a cushion. They woke him...and he rebuked the wind and said to the sea: ‘Quiet! Be still!’ The wind ceased. There was great calm.”

(Mark 4: 37-38)

When I was in Tiberius, March a year ago, I visited a small museum in the Kibbutz called Nof Ginosur. There is a recreated first century fishing boat whose remains were discovered a number of years ago. The boat has been rebuilt and placed on display with an accompanying visual soundtrack about first century fishing on the Sea of Galilee. The first thing that struck me was how small the fishing boat was. It could hold a couple of fishermen and their nets and any catch of fish but it would be difficult to put more than a few men in such a boat.

So when I hear today’s gospel about Jesus being asleep on a cushion in the rear of the boat I thought to myself that his being able to sleep in such a small boat—even in calm waters—would be a kind of miracle. I know I would be hard pressed to be able to sleep in such a craft let alone I a nighttime storm. Now, Mark says that there were a number of boats crossing at this time. I have seen storms on the Sea of Galilee. They make you happy you are safe on land.

Having grown up around boats and water at the Jersey shore and having had my share of experiences just of being on Manahawkin Bay during some bad storms it can be a very unpleasant experience, a very frightening experience. I get the same impression from today’s gospel. And there is Jesus commanding the wind and the sea. Who does this? Who is able to do such a thing? And who is able to calm the storm just by speaking a word to the storm? Only the Lord of Creation. And that is who they concluded Jesus was because of this very simple but very clear display of power.

Again, who can do this? What human being even tries? What human being knows that he has the power to subdue the forces of nature in chaos? Only the Holy One of God. Could Jesus be the Holy One of God/ That is the question of the week.