

A Day With Christ

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It is most fortunate that we are able, from the different accounts given us by the inspired writers, to reconstruct the series of events, which occupied one entire day in the public life of Our Lord.

Early that morning He is alone. We can easily enough envisage Him walking along a country road that winds its way through the fertile uplands of Galilee. Hills green with pasture rise up on His right hand and on His left and the valley, lying between the hills, teems with golden corn. Over there on one side, He can just get a glimpse of the waters at the southern end of Lake Genesareth where they narrow and flow down between the banks of the river Jordan. There is no sound of human voice to be heard for the farmers have not yet come out of their hamlets to begin the day's work in the fields. Only the bleating of sheep or the lowing of cattle sends its echo into the valley, or the song of birds breaks out high above His head filling the air with a rain of melody.

As He walks, there is a look of gladsome expectancy on the face of Our Lord. He has appointed this morning for the re-assembling of His twelve apostles. A few weeks ago, He had dispersed them, two by two, round the various towns and villages, and He had given them minute instructions concerning the methods to be employed in the work of spreading His gospel, the good news He had brought to men. And now this morning they are to be back. Soon they will be here telling Him how everything has fared. He is first at the place agreed upon for them to meet and He sits down here upon a mound of grass by the side of the road to await their arrival.

From this point of vantage where He is sitting, Jesus has a full view of the valley that stretches out at His feet. Presently His attention is attracted by a movement in the trees below. He watches and sees two men push their way out into the open space and at once turn their eyes instinctively in His direction. Their pace quickens as they recognise Him and you might have seen them point Him out to each other assuringly. They are coming down from the north – from Tiberias perhaps, or Magdala the city of pleasure. Two others are approaching from behind where the Master is seated. Their mission has been to Naim, or, it may be, to Nazareth where Mary His Mother will have made sure to meet them and ask all about her divine Son. Others are over from Cana or down from Capharnaum. Indeed they are closing in about Him from every direction, six pairs of them in all, all eager to meet Him and each other once again and to recount the labours and the successes and the failures of the past few weeks. What will have impressed them most of all is the tragic death of the Baptist. They will want to tell Him of the price he had to pay for his outspoken denunciation of the sin of Herod the incestuous man. And they will not have failed to understand that all who would be His disciples and take their stand against the world must be ready to pay a similar price.

So now, He is alone no longer. Two by two, they have come and knelt for His blessing. It is good to feel the pressure of His hands resting upon their heads, good to receive His smile of welcome. They press in around Him – Peter and Andrew, Philip and John, and the rest of His twelve. So much is there to talk about. Full as they are of news of their missions they can scarcely allow each other time to tell it. Their preaching has worked marvels everywhere. Multitudes followed them from all

sides. They went into the homes of the sick and healed them with the touch of their hands. The whole countryside is stirred by the wonders they have wrought. Why even the evil spirits themselves were subject to them and at their command had gone out of the unfortunate persons possessed. Everything is looking most hopeful, in spite of the death of John. Judas himself is jubilant and enthusiastic today.

And throughout it all Jesus sits and listens, asking here and there just an occasional question, looking in His deep searching way at each as he tells his story, an intense interest showing itself in the expression of His face, and a wealth of love for each of them, for even Judas, which He cannot conceal, shining in His eyes.

All this enthusiasm may be a little childish. Running through it there may be at least a narrow vein of self-complacency and self-love, but in the main, it is the outcome of their love for Him and for souls and His human Heart appreciates it. Later, He will train them to detachment from this success and popularity but He is infinitely patient in waiting for His opportunity to enforce a lesson. For the present, He will be satisfied to shield them from another danger, which He sees well enough is threatening, though from them it is hidden. Active labour, even of a sacred character, must not engross them. They must learn the value and indeed the absolute necessity of prayer and withdrawal from the turmoil of exterior things.

Their preaching has been blessed with great success, and He wishes, as they do, to make sure that the success is going to be permanent. On another occasion, He will tell them: 'In this is My Father glorified – that you bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.' They have brought forth abundant fruit and His Heart rejoices to hear about it. What is wanting in order to secure that the fruit will remain?

For this, it is absolutely necessary to be filled with a spirit of prayer. Their work is super-natural, the end they have in view is super-natural, the salvation and the sanctification of men's souls. Now for a supernatural aim the means employed must be supernatural too, and foremost amongst these is a steady constant stream of prayer vivifying and purifying all their exterior labours. They cannot enkindle His love in the hearts of men if they be not themselves aflame and prayer is the fuel, which must feed that flame.

Every period spent in prayer is like an armful of dry brushwood placed on the fire. When it is thus constantly replenished, a time comes when the fire can no longer contain itself within the strait barriers of an apostolic heart. It must needs break out and communicate itself to others. Hence, the apostle's influence for good will be in direct proportion to the union he maintains with God by his life of prayer. The more close and constant this union, the more freely will divine grace flow into his soul – as the sap flows unimpeded into the branch. And it is only through the grace of God that souls can be won. The apostle must be a bearer of grace. He must draw his supplies from the heart of Christ and it is by prayer especially that he gains access to this divine storehouse. 'Without Me,' Our Lord will proclaim, 'you can do nothing.'

So now that all about their work is at last told it is Our Lord's turn to speak. He stands up, advances a pace or two, and steps right into the centre of the group. His comprehensive gesture includes them all. With both arms fully extended He looks from one of them to another in that deliberate way of His and expresses an invitation that must have thrilled them to hear: 'Come apart into a desert place and rest awhile.' It is an invitation to lay their excitement aside, to forget all their eagerness and their plannings about external things, and to withdraw for a while from the tumult. And what does

He want them to do in the desert place? They are to come face to face with God, Using if necessary even a holy violence in the effort to do so. They are to pray. They are to kneel down and allow Him to look into the innermost places of their souls.

Every morning at the beginning of Mass, using the ritual of Saint Pius V, the priest cries out from the Psalm: 'Judge me, O God.' (Psalm 43:1 called Psalm 42:1 in the Vulgate.) He cares little for the opinions of men, especially at this supreme moment. But what he does very much want to discover is the verdict of God upon his life and actions. The object of the sojourn in the desert is to bring about between God and the soul this close contact. When thus 'apart' with Him, God often chooses to draw aside a little of the veil that dims men's vision of the realities of life.

The result is that they now see life from a new angle. When immersed in work, even apostolic work, when tasting the pleasures, even the good and innocent pleasures, of life, there is always danger of losing perspective. The soul must step out of everyday environment in order to be able to see life through the eyes of Christ. With the vision comes a different standard of values, quite a new appreciation of the eternal value of the soul and the purpose of existence.

In saying this, we are only echoing the words of the late Holy Father. In his Letter on promoting the use of Spiritual Exercises, Pope Pius XI writes: 'If we would cure this sickness from which human society suffers so sorely what healing remedy could we devise more appropriate for our purpose than that of recalling these enervated souls, so neglectful of eternal things, to the recollection of the Spiritual Exercises? And indeed if the Spiritual Exercises were nothing more than a brief retirement for a few days, wherein a man, removed from the common society of mortals and from the crowd of cares, was given not empty silence, but the opportunity of examining those most grave and penetrating questions concerning the origin and the destiny of man; whence he comes and whither he is going; surely no one may deny that great benefits may be derived from these Spiritual Exercises. But pious retreats of this kind do much greater things than this, for since they compel the mind of man to examine more diligently and intently into all the things that he has thought or said or done, they assist the human faculties in a marvellous manner; so that the mind becomes accustomed in this spiritual arena to weigh things maturely and with even balance, the will acquires strength and firmness, the passions are restrained by the rule of counsel; the activities of human life, being in unison with the thoughts of the mind, are effectively conformed to the fixed standard of reason. Lastly, the soul attains its native nobility and altitude.

'...The human mind, like water when enclosed around, is gathered up to higher things, because it seeks that from which it is descended; but when it is left free it perishes because it spreads itself uselessly on lowly things. It is of the greatest importance... that a man should hide himself in that blessed secrecy where, instructed by heavenly teaching he may form a just estimate and understand the value of human life devoted to the service of God alone; he may abhor the turpitude of sin; he may conceive the holy fear of God; he may see clearly unveiled the vanity of earthly things...'

These are the reasons for which Jesus invites the soul to come apart. And you will always find that those who listen to His invitation and give themselves much to prayer gradually lose interest in many of the things which hitherto used to absorb them. The tittle-tattle about your neighbour; the latest film about which everyone is talking; the details about that marriage – where they went for the honeymoon, what the bride wore, what presents they received; the gossip reported in today's paper; even a grave subject like the war – such things as these can no longer grip the attention in quite the same way, when in a desert place there has been vouchsafed the larger vision.

‘Come apart into a desert place and rest awhile.’ The prospect fascinates these friends of Christ. Apart with Him! Jesus all to themselves for an entire day! No troublesome crowds to bother them either, or take Him away from them! It is rich reward indeed for their weeks of labour, exactly what they would have loved to suggest themselves. So, happy as children they retrace their steps down along the slope of the hill – but this time there is the huge difference that He is with them. Once more, they cross the valley, and thence make for the lakeside. Everything they require is here – boat, rudder, oars and sail – all lying to hand at the water’s edge. Peter leads the way and kneels on the sand to hold the bow steady while Jesus steps in and sits in His place. The others follow after the Master, the last man remaining behind for a moment to give the vessel a good push off from the shore. Then he too leaps in after the others. All oars are out together, they dip, and away speeds the little craft, heading straight for that ‘desert place’ which they know Our Lord to have in His mind.

They can scarcely realise it. It seems too good to be true that they are to have Him thus to themselves. His thoughtful ways, His gentleness and patience and unfeigned affection for them have long since captivated their hearts. They knew full well the power of the words that fell from His lips. At another time, even His enemies will have to confess that never did man speak like this Man. And now here they are, rowing all together to that lonely place, and He is going to be with them all day, and they are going to listen to that voice and he taught those sublime lessons of His and in a language of which He alone holds the key. Truly a fascinating prospect.

But alas for their grand expectations! As they pull in, in sight of the lonely spot they had in mind, the gladsome light that had been shining in their eyes gives place to a cloud of anger and disappointment. The very worst has happened. Before them, the northern shore stretches out – and it is black with people! What has befallen? Simply this. The crowds had missed the oars and the boat from the slip on the southern side and they had rightly surmised in consequence that Jesus must be somewhere out on the sea. So, quite determinedly, they had walked around the shore knowing that they were bound to meet Him somewhere, wherever He would land. And here is the reward for their search, a rich reward indeed. Jesus is found. They could not manage without Him. They were hungering for Jesus, and, intoxicated with joy, they stand on the shore watching the little boat ploughing its way through the waves. Jesus is in the boat and they want Him. If He be with them nothing else matters very much.

And here ends the fond dream of the apostles. Ruefully they have to admit it for they know well by now what manner of Man He is. He will never have the hardihood to tear Himself from these crowds. ‘He received them,’ one of the twelve recalled later, ‘and began to teach them many things. He spoke to them of the kingdom of God and healed them who had need of healing.’ (Saint Luke recorded the recollection, Luke 9:11.) You would almost suspect him of wishing to add: ‘And in the midst of this He forgot all about His twelve disciples and the invitation given them to spend the day apart with Himself alone!'

The whole day passed like this – Jesus teaching, Jesus answering questions – some of them foolish questions enough; Jesus listening to stories of sorrow and knowing exactly the correct word to say by way of comfort; Jesus healing their sick; Jesus giving Himself selflessly to anybody who happened to want Him. He seems to have forgotten all about the pleasant programme planned out for Himself and His chosen twelve this morning. Everything is working out so differently. But how could He go away with all these needing Him so? They have come seeking Him like sheep gone astray, and is He the Shepherd going to turn His back upon them? They look to Him to lift their burdens; He is able to give them rest to their weary souls and is He going to deprive them of it? He

had said 'Come to Me and I will refresh you.' And now that they have come, is He going to seek to evade them?

How compliant He is! With what apparent ease does He, for the sake of others, put aside His own plans and allow everything to be upset! It is only when you have tried to imitate Him in this trait of His character that you discover how difficult it is. You are travelling in the bus and the driver takes you a few hundred yards beyond your stopping place. At once, you are curious or at least much irritated, and you probably tell him so in no measured terms. Why? When you sit back and examine your motive, don't you see it is selfishness? You are put to the small inconvenience of walking that little extra portion of the road – and you object.

You are in a hurry and somebody intercepts you. You glance at your wristlet watch impatiently. You answer him shortly and bustle him out of your way and let him see clearly that you regard him as a great nuisance, if not worse. It is not easy to be patient, not easy to practise self-control at a moment like this. And anyhow, you make little effort to conceal your annoyance and your desire to be rid of this bore. When finally you have succeeded in shaking him off, you turn the corner and run into a great friend of yours. Such a transformation now! At once, you are all smiles, and despite your hurry, you are going somehow to manage a few minutes for a chat. When you do part, it is with obvious reluctance and the comforting assurance that you will meet again very soon. You will probably be late now for your first appointment. Well, what about it? You will frame some sort of excuse. All this when you think about it and see it through the eyes of Christ may well appear as evidence of a secret selfishness and pride. You know not of what spirit you are.

Sanctity is very tolerant. Sanctity is self-effacing. You will find that genuinely holy men and women have analysed the motives of their actions. You will observe that they are careful to let much pass them by about which others make a fuss. They are not much concerned if by doing so they appear to be losing their 'rights.' The fact is that they have steeped themselves in the life of Christ and they have learned from Him to let others have their way when they can do so without compromise of principle. Like Him, they prefer to keep silence when self-love would urge them to answer back. Like Him, they will only smile good-humouredly, when we bridle up and prepare to make a frontal attack. Like Him, they will seem not to hear that unkind remark or notice that deliberate insult. Like Him, they will watch for an opportunity of repaying with kindness those who have offended them. Like Him on the occasion we have under consideration, they show patience when people are unreasonable and upset their plans.

All this is sheer nonsense to those who have not learned Christ. The natural way is to chafe and complain loudly and try to insist on having things your own way. And I am afraid that the apostles had still much of the natural man in them. And small blame to them, you would say if they were annoyed. Here is the whole day being wasted and they are almost entirely out of the picture. At last, evening begins to close in and now they hope that there may be some chance that He will dismiss the multitudes and allow themselves to have even an hour or two in quiet with Him. He promised the whole day after all.

They must watch their opportunity. They manage to push their way through the crowd and seize upon one of His unoccupied moments to tell Him what they want. 'Master, this is a desert place, and it is late now... Send them away that they may buy themselves victuals.'... 'Send them away!' That would be scant courtesy – to dismiss in this summary fashion the vast multitude of five thousand men, not to mention the women and the children, who had shown such devotion to Him

all day long. He has plans of His own to meet the emergency; He decides that He must provide for them, somehow, even in this desolate spot. ‘How many loaves have you?’ He asks. Andrew makes enquiries and discovers a little boy with five loaves and two fishes. Utterly useless, of course – in any hands other than those of Jesus of Nazareth.

In the account of what follows, it is very easy to detect traces of peculiar satisfaction in Our Lord as He makes His detailed arrangements. He is going to allow Himself the happiness of providing a feast for His friends and to work a miracle in order to supply their needs. First of all, they are ordered to sit down on the grass. They divide up into groups and obey, their eyes fixed all the time questioningly, curiously, on the face of the Master.

What can He have in mind? Next, the little boy is brought forward and told to hand over the store that was intended as a lunch for himself and a companion. He does so of course, because it is the command of the great Prophet, though perhaps not without a rueful glance at his departing satchel. Then Our Lord takes the five loaves and the two fishes into His hands and standing, lifts up His eyes towards heaven in fervent prayer. He blesses the food and gives it back to the disciples, bidding them distribute it amongst the expectant crowds. Marvel of all marvels, it multiplies in their hands.

No sooner is one loaf given away than another appears in its place; no sooner have the two fishes left the hands of the disciples than presently they discover two more. There is sufficient for all and this is indeed a great miracle; but it is still more wonderful that there is a superabundance. ‘They did all eat and were filled... and they gathered up and filled twelve baskets with the fragments... which remained over unto them that had eaten.’

In view of this miracle, it should not be difficult to understand and apply to our lives, the lesson of trust, which Jesus is never tired of inculcating. In the very first sermon He preached, He gives prominence to the importance of depending with childlike confidence upon God. He was addressing men who were of the earth, earthly. They were much concerned about their money, their market, their farms and their crops, their bread and butter, their worldly losses and their worldly gains. And in a passage of great beauty, He endeavours to wean them from their excessive anxiety about what is merely temporal. Let them lift up their eyes to heaven and see these tiny birds flitting across the sky this evening. These have no sense, no foresight to gather into barns against the winter. Let them look at those lovely flowers swaying there in the autumn breeze. His hearers have a Father in heaven Who clothes these things with such splendour. They have a Father in heaven and not even one of these small birds falls to the ground but He knows all about it and permits it to happen. Now, says Our Lord, you are the children of this Father. Is it too much to entrust to Him your needs seeing what He does for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field?

As He continued His missionary career, Our Lord loved to come back again and again on this same theme. Wherever He found this trust, He praised it; wherever trust was wanting, He showed displeasure and disappointment. The centurion fell down on his knees before Him to plead for his servant who was lying at home sick of the palsy. ‘And Jesus said to him: “I will come and heal him”.’ The man’s humility took alarm; he was not worthy that Jesus should enter under his roof and he said so.

Let the Prophet only pronounce the word from a distance and the servant would be all right. This deep trust won from Christ the cure that was sought. But He was unable to refrain from adding an

expression of admiration at the man's trust, and He declared that He had not found so great a faith in Israel.

A little later, a poor woman with an issue of blood drew near Him full of trust. If she could only touch the hem of his garment! And her confidence is rewarded and praised in the same way, and she went back to her house cured.

His disciples going out to preach were instructed to bring no scrip for the journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff. The Lord, for Whose sake they were labouring, would provide. Let them trust Him. Indeed if they had a strong trust and did not stagger, the mountains themselves would obey them and at their word betake themselves from one place to another!

So, from a great number of instances do these few which are selected show how much He had at heart the desire to see men place all their trust; when they failed Him, He was not slow to express his disappointment. Out on the lake, a violent storm had arisen and they were terrified. He was with them in the boat, but He was lying asleep. 'Lord,' they cried, 'save us; we perish.' Save them indeed He did, but not until He had rebuked their want of trust. 'O ye of little faith, why did you doubt?'

Now there are three reasons amongst many others why He expects us to have this trust in Him. First of all, because He, being the well-beloved Son of God, has found favour in the sight of His heavenly Father. Hence, we should trust that whatever He asks the Father, the Father will do. Secondly, He demands this trust because He is our Elder Brother. He loves each one of us then, and is much more solicitous about our true interests than we ourselves can possibly be. And lastly, as proof of this anxiety, He has handed over to us all the merits of His Sacred Passion – what St. Paul calls 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' We have no concept of the immense spiritual wealth that is at our hand. We bemoan our poverty, but He has placed in our hand infinite riches. We complain of our weakness but He is strong. We are crushed underneath a load of sin and sinfulness. But Jesus is sinless, Jesus is sanctity incarnate, and Jesus belongs to us – more than that, Jesus by grace has identified Himself with us. 'All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' 'In all things you are made rich in Him... so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace.'

This feeding of the multitude in a desert place is yet another illustration of Our Lord's kindly solicitude, and of the power He wields of being able to substantiate His promises.

Enthusiasm waxes high at this miracle and the crowds want to take Him away forthwith and make Him king by sheer force. But once again, that is not His way; His kingdom is not of this world. We have it that He 'compelled' the apostles to go again into the boat and row out to sea while He dismissed the people. (Mark 6:45) It is a very significant word – compelled. One thinks of them as being quite conscious of their importance. After all, was it not in their hands that the food multiplied? And it is not a little gratifying to move in and out amongst these thousands, and, with all due reserve and modesty of course, to listen to their laudations. A new danger is beginning to raise its head and Jesus is quick to see it and ward it off. Self-complacency, vain-glory, seeking the applause of men, has a deadly fang. It might easily rob them of the merit, or much of the merit, of their good works. It has done so many, many, times since those days! That is why Jesus 'compelled' them to leave the admiring crowds alone. You can almost see Him calling them by name. You can almost imagine poor Peter pretending not to hear! Peter would want to listen to the canticles of praise but he was 'compelled' to give ear to the word of Christ and trudge down to the shore. For Jesus was insistent that he go into the boat.

There was another reason too for their reluctance to go. After all, their whole day had been spoiled and it was only natural that now at last they would want to stay with Him and have Him to themselves. But He would not be satisfied that they should be only natural. With their affection for Him there was mixed up the mere natural pleasure they experienced in being in the company of a Man of such charm. He wants from them a supernatural love – which will indeed be helped by the natural but not supplanted by it. There was still in the apostles too much that was merely natural and from this too they must be detached. Their devotion must rest, not on sentiment, but on doing God's Will, so He 'compelled' them to give up their natural love of what they would like to do in order to exercise them in that spirit of detachment which is the foundation of true holiness.

So once more the boat's moorings were loosened, the oars were put out and twelve disappointed men proceeded, reluctantly enough, to row across the lake.

Meantime He Himself sent the crowds back home, and was now at last quite alone, He began to walk at a slow pace, up along the slope of the hill. Twilight is gathering in, and all day long since early this morning when He welcomed back His apostles, He has been in the midst of men, at the beck and call of everybody who happened to want Him.

Throughout the day's work, there has been most vividly present to Him a sense of the nearness of His Heavenly Father. He always saw the face of that Father for He enjoyed the Beatific Vision. And now that the crowds are gone, He is free to give vent to the longing that is ever present for converse with that heavenly Father. We have seen something about His compliant ways and there never was a suggestion in His dealings with men that He wanted to be rid of them. More than His great apostle Paul, Jesus is 'all things to all men.' But while this is true it has also to be recognised that He longed for a spell of quiet prayer, for the love of the Father was burning in that Sacred Heart.

And now He has the opportunity. You might think that, surely, a good night's rest is due to Him and you would be quite right. But so strong is the urge to seek the Father's face in prayer that even the well-earned repose must be sacrificed for it. 'He fled Himself again into the mountain to pray, Himself alone... and when it was evening He was there alone.' Kneeling by the side of a jutting piece of rock on the hill, He gives Himself unreservedly to prayer. His hands clasped tight together; His body motionless; His thoughts lifted far above those bustling worldly-minded crowds; His eyes perhaps closed and His face aglow with divine love; His whole being buried deep in the realisation of the truth that He and the Father are most intimately united – the Father gazing with infinite complacency into Christ's immaculate soul, and that soul reflecting with a truly wonderful precision of perfection the beauty of the Godhead. Some such picture as this does Saint Luke call forth when he writes of another occasion: 'He spent the whole night in the prayer of God...' (Luke 6:12) Saint Matthew records of this particular time 'and when it was evening He was there alone.' (Matthew 14:23)

And meanwhile what has been happening to His twelve apostles? Misfortune has overtaken them for they have run into one of those sudden storms that sweep down from the high cliffs surrounding the lake. It is to be well noted that they encounter this great danger notwithstanding the fact that they have undertaken the voyage at the express command of Christ. Indeed, we have seen that they had to be 'compelled' to go into the boat. That is often His way of testing the worth of His friends. When you are in the state of life for which He has destined you, you might imagine you have a right to expect that He should shield you, in it, from at least serious temptation.

But often He does not. Each walk of life has its own peculiar dangers and love for Christ proves itself precisely by loyalty to Him in the midst of storms, which He Himself has foreseen and permitted.

Indeed this whole episode is in many ways very typical of human life. Like the apostles, every man is out on the sea of life. Like them, we each have undertaken the journey because He has launched us. And there should be nothing what-ever to surprise us if we run into many a squall of temptation, even fierce and persistent temptation, before we reach the shore and safety. When the apostles were in danger that night, Jesus was praying for them as He knelt on the mountain-side. He knew all about the panic that had seized upon them. He foresaw this danger when He compelled them to embark. He not only allowed them to run into the storm but He actually ordered them to face it. But their security lay in His protecting prayer. And where does ours lie if not in that same prayer of Christ ascending for us from the altar and Tabernacle as faithfully as it arose from His Sacred Heart that night when that little boat was being tossed about by the winds?

What commotion there must have been on board and what terror! The evangelist tells us that they were filled with a great fear, and I expect you will say small blame to them. For all that, their anxiety was reprehensible, for it argued a want of that trust in Him, which He had been so much at pains to engender. It is true that the waves are rising mountains high and their little craft is threatened every moment as she is pitched here and there by the violence of the storm. But why are they in these straits except that He has put them there? The danger is not of their own seeking and when they have reached a higher degree of holiness, they will understand that since He had ordered them to come out here, He too would know how to deliver them. And even if He did not come to their aid at all what about it? Should not the prospect of dying in obedience to the divine will have been enough? Later indeed, they will understand all this, for most of them will give this very proof of their love.

But at the moment they are filled with terror and it is a consolation to us to see it. For which of us does not quail before the storm at times, even when the storm breaks upon us through no fault of our own? Even when it comes upon us direct from His hand as it came on the apostles this night?

But there was no use in lying down in the boat and giving up the struggle so they did all in their power to grapple with the elements. They tugged at the oar although they could neither make any headway nor get back to the starting-place. In this too they gave us a grand lesson. For even though with us too the night be pitch dark and the wind howls about us, even though there be no apparent use in our efforts, there is still one only course to be pursued – at all costs to keep trying. ‘God,’ says St. Teresa, ‘withholds Himself from nobody who perseveres.’

And that was the happy experience of the apostles. Their persevering attempt is rewarded for Christ comes to them walking upon the waters. The elements that were a source of danger are now the very same which bear to them their Deliverer. And that trial which is weighing upon you so severely, that wearing illness, that harassing temptation, that mental anguish, those torturing scruples, that good position which you lost through no fault of your own – whatever it may be, you may be assured that it is going to be the very channel through which grace will flow into your soul, on condition that, like the apostles, you do but persevere. After they had struggled by themselves for a while, He took control of the little boat and brought them all safe to land. And this is how His day ends – still at its close do we find a Christ Who is all things to all men.

Yes, the whole scene vividly represents life. For every follower of Christ there is necessarily the fight on the ocean wave. It is hard to be always struggling and we grow weary. Times there are when the prize promised seems so unreal and afar off. But these are the periods when Jesus asks for love's supreme proof – trust in Him and His promises in spite of all. For we know that the storm will be quelled and the night will pass and the blackness will be swallowed up in the glory of the dawn when Jesus at last guides the little bark and brings it safe to land. It will be the ending of another day, a happy ending. It will be the beginning too of a day, a day whose brightness will never wane for this is a new land and the shore we have now reached is called eternity.

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