

When I visited the Holy Land on pilgrimage ten years ago, one of the excursions was a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee. Luckily it was sunny, and beautifully calm.

It is a land locked lake, surrounded by hills, relatively small. 13 miles long and 8 miles at its widest point; it is big enough, however to cause real problems in bad weather, and bad storms can suddenly materialise as if from nowhere - in no time at all the wind can sweep down from the surrounding hills, rush through the narrow gorges, and whip up the sea – and that is what happens in the gospel – there is a rapid change of weather, and it takes even the disciples completely by surprise, don't forget they would have been very familiar with this lake, and its potential dangers, but this storm must have been particularly fierce to make them panic as they did – the waves begin to break into the boat, so that it starts to sink.

And in the midst of it all there is their teacher and master asleep. They shook Jesus awake. "Don't you care?" they cried. "This is an emergency! If you don't get up and pull your weight or we're all going under, we'll all drown."

What did they think he was going to do? They wanted him to leap to his feet and join the frantic activity – trying to save the boat - but he ignored the boat completely.

None of the disciples are ready for what Jesus did do, and when everything is calm again, they are astounded, filled with awe, and it prompts the question which is at the heart of today's liturgy, indeed it is the central question in the gospel of St Mark "Who then can this be if the wind and the sea obey him?"

Only God has power over nature, as we read in the first reading from the book of Job and in the psalm. So who is this Jesus, who has just shown he has that same power?

It is a question the Mark answers for his readers at the very beginning of the gospel – on the very first page, he tells us clearly who Jesus is – he is the Christ, the Son of God.

From then on, we hear the accounts of what Jesus did – and they are the kind of things that we would expect for the Messiah and the Son of God – he defeats the forces of evil, casting out devils, healing sickness and disease, subduing the wind and waves, preaching and teaching with divine authority – we all know how he is able to do

all these things, because we know who he is – but the people who first witness them are in the dark, they do not know who he is, and so none of it makes sense, not even to his closest friends the disciples – even they do not know who he is – they do not understand what is happening. Not until after the resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit do they fully get the message and start proclaiming it.

And if they had remained in the dark, and not proclaimed the truth about Jesus from the beginning, we would not be here today, there would be no Church and no Catholic faith. Our Catholic faith is based on the proclamation of the truth, in answer to that original question “Who can this be?” Our Catholic faith answers and proclaims: “He is God, The Word through whom the universe was created, who in the gospel shows his divine power through his miracles, and in his teaching shows us the truth about God’s love and the meaning of human existence.”

So here’s the challenge for us, indeed for every person, for the atheist, the agnostic, the indifferent, the lapsed Catholic – do we believe it is true – did Jesus really calm a storm, did Jesus really heal the sick and raise the dead? If it is not true then the gospel writers are liars, and the

Catholic faith is the biggest con trick in history. The apostles and martyrs sacrificed their lives for nothing, and the saints, popes, bishops, priests are deluded. That is what many people today actually think. But if we accept the truth of the gospel, then we must follow Jesus, and his teaching. All the words that the Lord has spoken, and that have come down to us through the bible and the Catholic church are true – this is how God wants us to be, this is how God wants us to live. We can’t ignore a single word of his, every teaching, every command is there to be followed. And not only that, we have a duty and a responsibility to proclaim the truth of Christ to others, as the first apostles did.

“Who can this be?” WE know the answer. So let us try to take every opportunity to proclaim the good news of the Son of God who came to us to save us from our sins and the power of evil.