THE STORM ON THE LAKE AS A TEST OF FAITH

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Beloved in Christ the Lord, on this Fourth Sunday after Epiphany we become witnesses of an extraordinary journey. Why extraordinary? After all, the Lord Jesus and the apostles crossed the Sea of Galilee hundreds, perhaps thousands of times, and the apostles knew these waters perfectly well. After all, most of them were fishermen; they had sailed it from end to end and across, and it seemed that nothing on this journey could surprise them. And yet we become witnesses of terrifying events. We become witnesses of an enormous storm on the lake.

And what is extraordinary about that? Surely the apostles had been through more than one storm. Well, my dear brethren, this storm was exceptional, because if we take the Greek text of the Gospel of Matthew, which we have just heard, then the Evangelist, in order to describe this storm, uses a Greek word, the word *seismos* — an earthquake. So this was not an ordinary, normal storm; it was a real tempest, like a tsunami, enormous waves that seemed about to swallow the apostles' boat at any moment. At the sight of these enormous waves, never seen before, the apostles, experienced fishermen, men of flesh and blood, fell into terror. So they began to cry out: "Lord, save us, we are perishing!" Humanly speaking, it seemed that there was no way out any more, that they were condemned to death, that in a moment these waves would swallow them.

THE STORM'S PURPOSE

And when we picture this terrifying storm, when we imagine what the apostles must have felt then, we can ask ourselves: did the Lord Jesus not foresee this storm? After all, He is God. Could the Lord Jesus not have warned the apostles? Could He not have said to them: let us not set out now, let us wait? Or could He not have told them to sail by a different route this time, so as to avoid this storm? That is how I reckon it, humanly speaking. But, my dear brethren, if we begin to think in God's way, then it becomes obvious to us that this storm was necessary for the apostles, that this terrible tempest was an element of God's plan, which the apostles did not understand at the time. But, my dear brethren, this storm was in truth a test of their faith. The Lord Jesus wanted to see how they would behave in the face of danger. Where would they look for rescue? And they cry out: "Lord, save us, we are perishing!" They turn to God for help. And Christ the Lord, who was only apparently indifferent to the fate of the apostles, was in truth not sleeping, my dear brethren, but watching and waiting for this cry of theirs. As soon as they turn to Him for help, He rises and gives the winds an order, and in the blink of an eye there is a great calm.

WAVES STRIKING THE BOAT

That is why the Fathers of the Church compared these waves, which struck the apostles' boat, to the attacks of the evil spirit on the holy Church. These waves that strike foretold the blows of the evil spirit and his servants against the Mystical Body of Christ. For the devil does everything he can to damage this ark of salvation, which is the holy Church. For this, over the centuries, as you know very well, there were attacks of various kinds from outside. But over the last several decades we are becoming witnesses to the fact that those who ought to be the helmsmen of the apostolic boat are becoming mere saboteurs. Those who ought to be shepherds leading us towards heaven are trying at all costs to drill as many holes as possible in the bottom of this boat of Christ, in order to sink it. Satan hates truth and light; he does everything he can so that his lie and his darkness may reign over the whole world.

And likewise, looking at the history of the apostles, we can, looking at our own experience, at the history of the holy Church, ask: why did God not spare the Church so many attacks? Why did He not prevent this crisis, this terrible crisis that we are now living

through? Could He not have led the Church by a different route, by a different way? Well, my dear brethren, the answer to this question is exactly what a believing man will give when he listens to the story of the apostles: this crisis, this upheaval, is simply necessary for us, because it is our test. It is our examination. Where do we place our trust, where do we look for rescue?

"LORD, SAVE US"

And may we, my dear brethren, after the example of the apostles, cry out: "Lord, save us, we are perishing!" May we look for no human solutions, may we never place our trust in any man, even the most powerful priest. We are to place all our trust in the Lord: "Lord, save us, we are perishing!" And this crisis which the holy Church is going through today, although humanly speaking it seems so incomprehensible, nevertheless has its purpose. Look at a tree that is beaten by the winds: dry, dead branches fall from it, dry, dead leaves. And after the storm that shook the tree has passed, it becomes stronger and more beautiful than it was before the storm. And likewise, my dear brethren, it is and will be with the holy Church. This crisis that we are living through will cleanse Christ's Church of souls that are dead and withered, and the holy Church will come out of it strengthened, more beautiful still than she was. We need only cry out for rescue to the Lord Jesus: save us, Lord!

My beloved, yet nowadays Catholics have stopped thinking in God's way and have begun to think humanly, in the Jewish way, and they do not believe the Lord Jesus, they do not trust Him, they treat His words and promises as if they were worth nothing. If it seems to you that you do not belong to such Catholics, then answer honestly in your heart: how do you behave in the time of your own storms and upheavals in life? Where do you look for rescue when everything in your life begins to collapse? Do you then call on the help of Christ on your road?

RESCUE OF THE CHURCH

On this Fourth Sunday after Epiphany we must thank Christ that He is always right beside us, within reach of our hand, exactly as He was in the boat with the apostles 2,000 years ago. So He is right beside us in the time of our storms and upheavals in life. Although His presence is often silent, humanly speaking barely noticeable, it is so constant and unchanging. And for this, my dear brethren, we must thank Christ today with all our heart. And in the face of the upheavals which the Church of today is experiencing, which we all, Catholics, are experiencing, we must, after the example of the apostles, cry out from a sincere heart: "Save us, Lord, we are perishing! Save Your Church from those criminals who want to destroy it and replace it with a new church which poses as the Catholic Church, which pretends to be the Catholic Church, but is a new religion, in which there is no longer any place for our Redeemer, in which there is no place for God, because man has taken that place." A fool is he who places his hope in man and who would look for rescue among men today. But, sadly, there is no shortage of such fools today even among Catholics, even among traditional Catholics.

Let us turn to the Lord and cry out: Save us, Lord, we are perishing! In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.