

Let us pray... Gracious God, gather your Spirit in this place. Open our hearts and minds so we may find you in all that we do. Guide our journey together, with you at the center. Amen.

When I was getting my bachelor's degree, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Australia.

And while I was there, I made a special trip to Heron Island, an island on the Great Barrier Reef...

My friends and I excitedly boarded the boat, took our seats and set sail for our destination.

It was a windy day and the waves were quite choppy. The boat, though quite large, seemed to be rocking too and fro, too and fro.

Immediately I started feeling sick to my stomach... You know, the unpleasant feeling of nausea, pain, and discomfort...

And no matter how still I tried to sit... No matter how hard I prayed... the feeling did not cease... In fact, it got worse and worse until I found myself in the throes of sea sickness, which lasted the entire 2-hour boat ride.

I was not prepared with Dramamine because I had never crossed the ocean on a boat, and so I had no idea what to expect.

And isn't that the case with so many things in life... Especially when we go from what is known into the unknown...

So quickly things can change... Ranging from excitement to downright uncomfortable and maybe even terrifying...

Especially since we don't always know what we are setting sail for... Even if we do our best to plan and prepare for what is next.

Instead, what we do know, is that uncomfortable things are going to happen.

And that storms are going to pop up along the way...

Storms like we have endured, with a ridiculously rainy spring and start to summer.

Storms like we heard in our Gospel today...

With a boat ride that was much different than mine.

In fact, in 1986 there was a discovery of a boat on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee.

This boat, commonly referred to as the Jesus Boat, is dated from the first century, and was uncovered during a drought.

The remains of the boat were only 27 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, with a maximum preserved height of 4.3 feet.

That is not much of a boat, if you ask me, to be out on the sea during a storm.

So, it is no wonder then, that our Gospel painted such a dire picture...

With waves crashing into the boat, with the boat filling with water and being tossed about the sea, threatening the very lives of those in it.

No wonder they feared the boat was about to capsize...

And there, in the midst of this storm... We find Jesus... Sleeping...

Now I don't know about you, but I can relate to this image... As I have sometimes wondered if God has been sleeping through my storms...

Because if God can really hear my prayers, why are they not being answered? Or why are they not being answered how I want?

And we don't really get an answer to this question in our Gospel today... But rather, the answer shows up in our reading from Job.

God speaks in Job by saying, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding."

An answer that is almost as unsettling as the storm itself... And an answer that has taken God 38 chapters to respond to Job...

God was silent for the first 37 chapters of Job, as Job and his friends plead his case and ask God why he has endured such suffering.

And now, this is how God starts his response, by saying, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"

Not a very Pastoral answer, but an answer that instead brings us to Genesis to the dawn of creation—when the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep.

The deep being a chaotic void, as water was often thought of in the ancient world... Something that only God could conquer and bring about life.

Which is what happens in Genesis. After the Spirit hovers over the deep the creation story begins, and goodness springs forth.

As we hear echoed throughout each day: God created, and God saw that it was good...

Our creation story invites us to ponder the good ways that God works, creates, and brings about life even in the midst of the deep, the chaos, and the storms...

Which means that God is inviting Job – and by Job, I mean us – to ponder how God is at work in the midst of our storms, especially when it seems that God is silent or even sleeping...

God invites us to ponder how God is present in all things, in the known and the unknown, in the comfort and the discomfort, even if it is beyond our understanding.

Because by doing so, we are invited to revisit what we know... Things we have learned from Scripture and from one another.

Because faith, as personal as it is... Is not something we enter into alone. Faith is something we enter into together... With God and with one another.

Which is why God created us in God's image—so that we may constantly be reminded of God's divine presence and love in us and among us.

Love that began at the dawn of creation, when the Spirit hovered over the deep waters...

Waters that God brought life into... Waters that Jesus spoke to...

Waters that Jesus was baptized into...

And the same waters that we are baptized into...

As baptism is a sacrament that we enter into together. Nobody is baptized alone.

Baptism pours out God's love and grace, uniting us not only with Christ, but with one another.

Because baptism is a time for us to come together as a community of faith, sharing not only the goodness of God's promises, but also our responsibility to one another.

As we are called to love each other. To support one another. To hold one other in prayer, and to be held in prayer.

To hear, regardless of how things may seem, that God has got you...

Because even when you can't feel God's embrace, you can feel one another's embrace... A place where God is always present...

Because no matter how dark it gets, no matter how strong the storm, nor how silent God may be... God is with us...

This week as you journey into your unknown may this truth keep you afloat. May it bring calm to your storms, and may you be filled with God's Spirit as you welcome each day to set sail... Amen.