

I Will Arise
(Celebrate 1')

A song by a group called The Fishertalk. Suitable to recall that yesterday was observed in many churches in HK as Sea-Sunday. As it just happened, in Catholic churches here yesterday, people heard St Mark's gospel account of a storm on the Sea of Galilee which Jesus stilled: and an Old Testament reading about the bounds God set to the fury of the sea, from the book of Job. On top of that, we've been hearing constantly these past weeks and months about fishing boats, and their hazardous journey to HK laden with refugees. So perhaps it is timely to start putting these different themes together in Christian reflection and in prayer. For, in praying for those who make their living (and contribute greatly to ours) from working on the seas, and for all those who risk their lives to them, one can hardly forget about those who've been entrusting their lives to the sea, not seen at all, in hope of making a secure landfall free from fear and anxiety and hopelessness. Even without recent events, anyone living in HK for any length of time must in some way or other be conscious of the sea, its beauty, and its frightening power, in storm. Today, then, in our prayers let's remember the people of the sea, all kinds of people — to praise and give thanks to God our Father for those whose work on the sea, in trade or transport or fishing contribute so much more to our lives here than we ever think about: to ask God's care and protection for them: His blessing on those who help them in many ways in their hard and often isolated lives: to ask God's comfort and strength for those who have to entrust themselves unsafely to the sea, feeling forced to abandon their homes in order to find a new life. And to ask God's mercy and rest on all who've lost their lives on the seas.

One of the curious things about that gospel episode I mentioned and you may have heard read yesterday, is why Jesus' disciples, many of them fishermen in the first place, allowed themselves to get caught so badly in a storm on the lake — they surely must have known how treacherous that lake could be. But they followed their Master's instruction to cross over to the other side, as night was falling. And when the storm did come, and they became desperately frightened, it seemed they lost that implicit trust and faith they'd followed Jesus with. He remarked on it, as He calmed their fear as well as the waves: "How come you have so little faith?" It seemed His presence there, with them, hadn't been enough to reassure them: but His presence and His word stilled the wind and the sea around them. It's a very ancient interpretation to see that scene as an allegory of the Church, a boat where Christ is and where all sorts of storms and waves come battering at it and it seems in danger of sinking into the sea, because He appears to be sleeping. It points up the fact that, even where Christ is present, there's no guarantee of a smooth passage through life — and our slowness, timidity to put full trust in His saving power and the force of His words. Whatever may happen, in a true sense we are all in the one boat with Jesus Christ: and with Him alone lies our safety, in the end. Let's contemplate that gospel scene again, and pray for all who are at sea, literally or metaphorically, as we listen to another song by the Fishertalk.

MUSIC "Come to the Water" [First Sunday 1']

PRAYERS

We use a number of metaphors from the sea in our ordinary speech — being at sea, sinking, going down, in the same boat. We use phrases like that for being anxious, fearful, when the storms and waves that buffet us are within, in our hearts and lives. There too, Christ is present — is He ignored, forgotten about, allowed to seem to be sleeping? He's waiting to be asked: for our prayers to Him, communication/expression somehow of how we feel. His presence is with us: is His word there too, that word of His that is more than powerful enough to calm not only the waves and the winds but the fears and anxieties we harbour within ourselves. There are people who try to minister and mediate Christ's presence and word in a special way, to those whose work and lives are on the sea: while we pray for them, don't let's forget that, in one way or another, it's the calling of all Christians to bring that strength of Christ to others — if only we ~~were~~^{were} so timid and fearful ourselves, despite our standing on firm ground.