

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 23 June 2024

Dante, the great poet of the Renaissance, was exiled from his home in Florence, Italy. Depressed by this cruel turn of fate, he decided to walk from Italy to Paris, where he could study philosophy, in an effort to find a clue to the meaning of life. In his travels, Dante found himself a weary pilgrim, forced to knock at the door of Santa Croce Monastery to find shelter for a night. A brother within was finally aroused. He came to the door, flung it open, and in a gruff voice asked, "What do you want?" Dante answered in a single word, "Peace."

There is indeed a deep longing for peace in our hearts. And this peace comes in different forms depending on the circumstances people are in. "Peace" is what our brothers and sisters need as they flee wars and persecution. "Peace" comes in a form of security for someone who packed their belongings, embarked a long journey looking for greener pastures knowing that by doing so, they can feed their family and look after their well-being. "Better life" is what is hoped for by people crossing the sea that the other side will embrace them and provide a good future for them, and their families left behind.

This is the deepest longing of every refugee and migrant. As we gather in prayer for refugees around the world, we are reminded of the powerful passage from the Gospel reading today where Jesus calms the storm. In this story (Mark 4:35-41), we witness the disciples filled with fear as a great storm threatens to engulf them. They cry out to Jesus, who is peacefully sleeping in the boat, and He rises, rebukes the winds and the waves, and a great calm descends upon the sea.

Through this miraculous event, Jesus reveals His divine power over the forces of nature and His desire to bring peace and tranquillity to those in distress. In the same way, the plight of refugees and migrants today often finds them in the midst of turbulent seas, facing great suffering, uncertainty, and fear. Like the disciples, they cry out for help, seeking safety, shelter, and hope.

As followers of Christ, we are called to be like Jesus in the boat, calm amidst the storm, ready to extend a hand of compassion and

assistance to those in need. Just as Jesus brought peace to the disciples, we too are called to bring comfort and support to our refugee brothers and sisters, welcoming them with open arms and providing a safe harbour in the midst of life's storms.

For we all know how it is to be in the storm. There are moments in life wherein storms raged in our own lives. Just as the disciples faced a tumultuous sea, we too encounter trials, tribulations, and challenges that threaten to overwhelm us. In the midst of life's storms, when the winds of adversity howl and the waves of despair seem ready to engulf us, somehow a pair of hands held us off and brought us peace and calm even in the midst of chaos.

If we can only see ourselves in them, if we can only pause and listen to their life stories, if we can only count our blessings, we would realise how blessed still we are despite the many trials, tribulations, and challenges we are facing right now. We would then see that each step they take carries their hopes, dreams, and longings that someday, they will achieve that peace for themselves and for their family.

As followers of Christ, we are reminded of His compassionate heart for the marginalized and vulnerable. Jesus, who calmed the storm with a word, calls us to be agents of peace, love, and hope for those who are displaced and in need of refuge. In the face of the storms of war, poverty, persecution, and injustice that drive people from their homelands, we are called to be beacons of light and compassion, offering solace, support, and solidarity to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters. Just as Jesus showed His disciples that He was Lord over the chaos of the waters, we are called to demonstrate His lordship by extending a welcoming hand to those in need.

Let us remember His words, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40) and let us respond with open hearts and open arms to those who seek refuge and a new beginning among us. May we be guided by the example of Jesus, who calmed the storm and brought peace to His disciples, and may we, in turn, be instruments of His peace in the lives of refugees and migrants, offering them the hope and help they so urgently need.