

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Strength in Temptation

“Lord, save us, we are perishing” (Matt., 8:26)

The incident related in today's Gospel was most dramatic, and the Evangelist has depicted its great eloquence and power.

We behold the scene vividly—

- the storm suddenly arising on the Sea of Galilee and loosing its fury on the little boat containing Christ and His apostles, the increasing **terror of the disciples** as they realise the danger so that finally they **awakened Jesus** who was sleeping calmly in the stern of the boat, the **majesty of his command** to the winds and sea to desist, and **the great calm that at once** came over the waters in obedience to the voice of God.
- A similar situation often arises **in our souls**. We are molested by a sudden storm, a storm of human passion which threatens to bring spiritual destruction by leading us into mortal sin.
- It may be the passion of **anger**, urging us to injure a fellow man in word or in deed in revenge for a real or fancied insult.
- It may be the yearnings of **ambition**, which would have us seek honour or wealth at the sacrifice of God's law.
- Above all, it may be the strong impulse of **carnal gratification**, inclining a person to satisfy the passion of lust without regard for the dictates of reason and the commandments of God. At any rate this violent temptation causes a great disturbance in our soul, threatening a far greater tragedy than the wreck of a vessel at sea, the loss of sanctifying grace.

Modern psychology tends to the view **that man cannot overcome his strong emotions** and that it is even harmful to attempt to do so.

The Catholic Church however upholds the doctrine that we can overcome even the strongest temptation with the aid of God's grace. Even the most vehement inclination to sin can be conquered by the same means that the disciples employed in their hour of danger—

- turning to God with fervent, humble, confiding prayer. No one can ever claim that he was tempted so strongly that he could not resist. We have the teaching of the Church in support of this statement and the words of St. Paul asserting that God will not allow us ***to be tempted beyond our strength***. However, those who trust in themselves will not succeed. The grace we need will be granted us only if we pray as we should.

Practical Application

In times of temptation let your first recourse be a **prayer for strength**. Pray to our Lord and to his Blessed Mother through whom all graces are bestowed on men. Even the brief prayer ***“Jesus and Mary help me”*** is most efficacious.