

Panic after Panic. (Mark 4:35-41)

* Friends, just like the First colonists who encountered rivers and lakes during their travelling so are we, after leaving behind the green valley of Pentecost by chance arrived on the shore of a big lake that seems as large as an ocean. On the shore, we decided to sail in a boat to get to the other side. Somewhere in the middle, we were struck by a severe windstorm; the waves broke over our boat so that it, in a moment, filled with water. Please notice that the storm occurred at night, which can frighten even a brave man. Being terrified of the darkness and swamping waters, we fell into a panic.

* Dear Friends, we know that a strong wind may cause serious damage, if not death, if a person remains in the open without shelter. It is even more unsafe if you are driving a car, a flying an airplane or sailing a boat in a storm. Once, when I lived in Medina Lake, I watched a storm as I stood behind a palm tree. First, I noticed the clouds change their color becoming darker and radiant simultaneously. It was a very unusual phenomenon. It gave me a sense of fear. Soon the wind blew strongly and caused the waves to become as much as five or six feet tall. They jumped the concrete wall on our property easily and swamped to death all kinds of bugs within 10 feet. I said *Wow* and ran for a camera, keeping in mind that one picture is worth ten thousand words. If you would like to see the five foot wave on the lake I'll be glad to show it to you after the service.

* Thinking back to that nightmare we imagined ourselves in a dangerous situation having been threatened by flooded water, darkness, strong winds and an shipwreck. Although among us were a few very skillful sailors that was not enough. We had done all we knew, with all our energy to control the situation but it was not enough. We were completely exhausted fighting against the rocking boat and bailing out of the boat as we firmly held on. It seemed nothing could help in that moment and the worst of all is that we fell into a panic.

* I found that panic is broadly discussed on the Internet. With Google I found three solutions for panic. There are autosuggestion, medication and religion. Another remarkable thing I've learned is that a number of mentally ill people are usually more vulnerable to panic attack. Significant here is that mentally the ill can fall into a panic without reason. For instance, they might wake up to midnight with panic attack symptoms just because of imagined fears. Unlike them, we panicked for a real reason - due to a deadly storm.

Don't you think that psychologists or any one else are able to release people from real panic? But the world doesn't know any psychologist who would be able to handle windstorms.

* The Gospel reading for today portrays Jesus as the Lord of Creation who alone is able to stop calamities and save his people when they cry for help. Jesus is the only one who has never fallen into a panic. Moreover, he was sleeping in a peaceful and quiet spirit. The contrast between the disciples and Jesus Christ is vivid. Upon experiencing Jesus' deity the disciples fell into a panic after panic. *And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"* (Mar 4:41).

* Jesus' question, *Why are you so afraid* is addressed to all believers who are afflicted with great fear that is cause of panic. It focuses our eyes towards storms and closes our eyes towards Jesus. Is there any solution to escape the attack of fear that prevents us from thinking and acting proper? How we can escape from doing the foolish things. The history of Christianity witnesses that not all are afraid and fell into a panic. You might have heard the name John Huss. Tomorrow Church will celebrate him as a man of faith and as a martyr.

* John Huss, a Fifteen century Czech Catholic priest, philosopher, reformer, and master at Charles University in Prague became famous for being burned by Roman Catholics at the stake on the 6th of July 1415. He was sentenced to death for his beliefs and for teaching against papists on July 6, after a trial. Being at the place of execution he knelt down, spread out his hands, and prayed aloud. He focused on the words of God and God's promises. He believed that truth couldn't be compromised, and Jesus was with him. That is why even while being afraid he didn't fall into panic.

* The executioners undressed Huss and tied his hands behind his back with ropes, and his neck was fastened by a chain to a stake around which wood and straw had been piled so that it covered him up to the neck. At the last moment, the imperial marshal Von Pappenheim asked him to recant and save his life, but Huss declined with the words, "God is my witness that I have never taught that of which I have by false witnesses been accused. In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached, I will die today with gladness." He was then burnt at the stake. Thanks to the Lord that he doesn't allow the world and devil to sweep out the records regarding Christ's confessors from our memory.

* Friends, today we've heard three occurrences of storms in the lives of individuals; they are different, but

they are real stories. The reality of storms indicates that we cannot escape the harmful forces; of course they can affect us at any time but we should not allow fear to lead us into panic. We know that among Christians there are people who didn't fall into panic, likewise John Huss and other confessors after him, including Martin Luther, the Reformer. It is mean the situation is not absolutely helpless; we also can treat the *panic button* with contempt, although it is a miracle. In fact, John Huss was burned at the stake without panic, in fact, the disciples were terrified by a storm but did not die. Those were all miracles. And what the Bible teaches about the Author of miracles? It teaches that the Author of miracles is the Blessed Trinity. The Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit to his elect so that we hold firm onto Jesus Christ, believe him and follow him. In effect the tribulations and temptations would not affect us to death from panic after all. Be close to Jesus; invite him when you go by car, or by air, or when you travel by a boat. Ask Jesus and trust him, for his people belong the promise, *Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you*, (Gen 28:15). Amen.

Beloved, the love and protection of our Lord be with you always.

Amen