



**12<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time 23 June 2024**  
**Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh**

***“The Lord is the strength of His people”*** (Entrance Antiphon Psalm 27:8)

Years ago it was reported that Pope John XXIII was asked how he could get to sleep at night with so many concerns about the Church. He said having done all he could in the day: *“I leave it in God hands now”* and he slept soundly. I was reminded of the story when I read the Gospel for the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year. Jesus continues to sleep in the boat that is buffeted by a sudden storm on the lake. St Mark’s Gospel points to the contrast between the disciples terror and Jesus’ peace. The commentary in ‘Sunday Connection’ published by Loyola Press reads: *“This Gospel is a metaphor for our lives. We are in the boat, the storms of our life are raging around us, and like the disciples, we may believe that Jesus is unconcerned or sleeping....Jesus does not chide his disciples for waking him. Instead he chides them for their lack of faith....When we bring our worries to God in prayer, we might just begin to see things from God’s perspective.”* Furthermore, Mark is presenting a *“vivid portrait of Jesus, whose words and deeds show that he is the Son of God.”*

Joseph Pollard in his commentary writes: *“The wind retreats and the sea calms in response to the command of Jesus. Then he turns to the disciples and says: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” What are we to learn from these words and from this scene? I think we are to learn that Jesus remains present with us all through life, and as much in its stormy passages as in moments of calm. We are to learn that no threat or trial can overcome us so long as we retain trust and confidence in Christ. After all, He is committed to us and proved it on the Cross.”*

Recently I read an account by Deacon Dr Subhi Zora, Co-ordinator of the Chaldean Church in Iraq Community in the Archdiocese, of the experience of Cardinal Sako, the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Baghdad. The Cardinal had been exiled from Baghdad to Kurdistan in July 2023. The property of the Church was then taken and recognition of the Church withdrawn. Deacon Subhi writes: *“The Chaldean Church in Iraq, like many other Christian Churches in the East has been rejected, throughout its turbulent history, too many injustices and persecutions. However, these churches, their leaders, and their believers continued to survive courageously, thanks to their strong faith in Jesus Christ, their determination, and their perseverance.”* Deacon Subhi’s article is written in celebration of the Cardinal’s return to Baghdad and the restoration of Church property by decree of the Government in recent days. Throughout that time of exile Cardinal Sako remained strong in Faith and continued to lead his people in daily prayer and meditation via the internet. Dr Subhi concludes: *“His courage and determination is*

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*an example to us all, Christian believers everywhere, to act strongly and stand firmly against injustice of any kind.”* Many Iraqi Chaldeans in Baghdad and throughout the northern parts of Iraq, where the majority of Christians have taken refuge since ISIS invaded Mosul in 2017, came out to celebrate the victorious return of the Patriarch to the Diocese in Baghdad. These celebrations showed the faithful rally round their spiritual leader, his courage, and his firm stance with which he triumphed against those who wanted his downfall and that of the entire Chaldean Church.

This weekend in England Churches will celebrate two great Saints who kept their Faith in Jesus and the Catholic Church despite persecution and martyrdom: St John Fisher and St Thomas More. It is probably fair to say that more is known of the life of St Thomas More, the former Lord Chancellor of England than of St John Fisher the Bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of Cambridge University. Donald Attwater, in the Penguin Dictionary of the Lives of the Saints, records that from 1527 Bishop Fisher actively upheld the validity of Katherine of Aragon’s marriage with King Henry VIII, and was consistently opposed to the King’s claim to be head of the Church in England. In April 1534 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London; brought to trial in Westminster Hall, charged with treason in that he had denied the King’s ecclesiastical supremacy; he was found guilty and sentenced to death. As he waited at the Tower Gate he opened his New Testament and read the words of Jesus in John XV11 before he went to the Garden of Gethsemane, the scene of his agony and arrest: *“And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent. I have glorified thee on earth; having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before this world was made.”*

Like St John Fisher, we believe Jesus stands with us in the storms of our life and in our Faith in Him. We ask St John Fisher’s prayers that we may witness to others our trust in the Lord who is with us in the boat that is the Church despite the storms that threaten us. May we accomplish the work the Lord has called us to do in the power of the Eucharist. The Lord is the strength of His people. Amen.

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