A Letter from your Reader

Dear God, be good to me; the sea is so large, and my boat is so small.

* Traditional Prayer of a Breton fisherman

While walking the dog this week I bumped into Linda Whittaker in Church Street. Linda who lives in Gorran Haven is part of a team of four women from the South West who have teamed up to enter a race to row the Atlantic from the Canaries to Antigua. We were talking about the training and also the support that all the teams will be getting on the arduous journey across the water. “It is a small boat in a large ocean” said Linda. I was reminded of the prayer from the Breton fisherman quoted above that by coincidence I had only come across for the first time the previous day.

It is a concept that most of us are aware, particularly when we walk the coastal path to the Dodman or to Mevagissey. As you look from the cliff path out to sea you often see a solitary small fishing boat or leisure craft battling the waves, currents or tides and even on the calmest day it is then we realise the sheer mis-match of size in small vessel to mighty ocean. It is hardly fair. Small wonder there will be support teams for Linda and her crew, small wonder the smallest boat has radio, radar, and other safety equipment in an attempt to balance the odds.

The Bible has a story of a small boat on a large sea complete with the onset of a squally storm. It has some big waves, strong gales and some frightened men, and it has Jesus waking from His slumbers and calming the storm by His voice. It would be easy to think about the point of this story as Jesus having the power and authority over nature, “who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”. But the danger would be to think of Him as a type of celestial Paul Daniels or David Blaine.

I do not believe that the prayer of that Breton fisherman is solely about his occupation, I believe it is a picture of his life as a whole. Similarly the story of the storm on the Sea of Galilee is about our day to day lives. We are like a boat crossing the water. In the great scheme of things we are a small dot on the vast sea of life, a sea that can get very stormy and dangerous as we voyage across it. The metaphoric waves and winds are brought by loneliness, pain, illness, bereavement, injustice, poverty, anxiety, and they are ready to engulf us. We could panic, we could try and bale out the water ourselves to prevent the boat sinking, we could sit in fear and do nothing. Or we could turn to God, for He it is who resides in our boat, He it is that can bring Peace to the storms that surround us. However rough the storm we need not be afraid. The disciples only had a little faith, but they had a little faith and scared as they were they used it.

Graham Downes

P.S Linda Whittaker is part of a team called “Oarsome Foursome” who are rowing the Atlantic Challenge sponsored by Talisker Whisky. They set off on the 3000 mile journey for Antigua from the Canary Islands on December 12th of this year, hoping to complete the race in less than 50 days. They have to raise £100K for this adventure and have raised £30K so far. They are supporting three local charities, Carefreebreaks, Cornwall Blood Bikes and Exmouth Hospicare. You can get more information from their web site <http://www.oarsomefoursome.co.uk>.

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