

**Sign from God
Hurricane “Harvey”
(Mt 14:22-33)**

“O God, to whose commands all the elements give obedience, we humbly entreat you, that the stilling of fearsome storms may turn a powerful menace into an occasion for us to praise you” (Roman Missal, Prayer to Avert Storms).

It is humbling, and an occasion to praise God, when we experience the powerful forces of nature, and realize what God has put into place in His creation in order to bring about this world, unique in the entire universe, where man might live. Hurricanes and storms are necessary.

Thankfully, our community was spared from the worst effects of this hurricane, even though the eye passed within 30 miles of our town, and damage was limited to fences, trees, and some outbuildings. And signs.

God often sends a sign to His people in the midst of a natural disaster or calamity, something which stands out loud and clear even though surrounded by devastation and destruction, to remind them of His presence. Our church sign is such a sign from God.

Our church sign, like many signs in the area, was badly damaged by the winds of Hurricane Harvey, which were recorded here at 90 mph as the eye passed about 30 miles away. And yet, even though the fence next to the sign was blown down, even though the sign itself is half gone, and even though the sign experienced continuous hurricane-force winds for over an hour, the bottom half remained with the message intact, and the letters did not even move or get blown off. I have often driven past our sign during times of very mild wind, and seen the letters shifted or blown down.

The message – God’s message to us today – was from the Gospel two weeks ago, when the apostles experience the storm at sea, being battered by the winds and waves, and Jesus was in the mountains praying. But in the darkest part of the night, he came to them across the water, and immediately there was quiet. Jesus revealed himself not only as the Lord of human life, but the Lord over Nature and Creation.

Who knew when we put these words up (and due to my laziness in getting them changed) that very soon they would apply to us not merely spiritually, but physically, as we too, in the middle of the night, experienced the howling winds, the fear and vulnerability of our lives before the forces of nature?

God gives this special grace, to remind us that His words are firm, and that it is He the Lord who speaks them to us Sunday after Sunday. As the apostles were

delivered safely through the storm, so our community has been delivered safely through this trial. As Jesus was in the mountains praying for his Church in Peter's boat, so he continues to look out over his people and protect them from harm.

God gives us a sign, on a sign, to remind us that His word "forever stands firm in the heavens" (Ps 119:89) and in our lives; that "He who hears my word and builds his house upon them will withstand the winds that blow" (cf. Mt 7:24-27); that the tempest of hell itself will assail the Church, but never prevail (Mt 16:18).

