

In the late summer of 1999, several tropical storms moved through the South Pacific. Because at the time, my job in the military involved flying in reconnaissance aircraft in that area, our missions were hit and miss. The flight commanders were itching to log flight hours, and the slightest chance to launch a mission.

We had to at least a certain imaginary point on the map in order to say that we had a successful mission. And so, one day that summer, in-between tropical storms, we headed out.

It was slow going, because there was a storm that was sitting right on the spot on the map where we needed to be. We'd expected it to have moved east by the time we got there. Instead, it sat there and stayed put.

Frustrated, the mission commander decided that the best line of action was to fly over the storm. And so we did.

As we gained in altitude, so did the storm. The aircraft shook, and we ascended, and it shook harder, and we kept trying to gain altitude. I nervously fastened my seatbelt — to the amusement of my squadron mates.

Until ... BAM ... what sounded like a card-table chair being thrown against the outside of the fuselage ... and in a handful of seconds, we fell several hundred feet ... straight down.

We had lost an engine.

Now we were inside of the storm, being pulled and pushed at by high-speed winds. We were all ordered to strap in, and the pilots were going to have to kill a second engine for safety's sake. That would leave us with only two of the four engines.

Tied to our seats, the flight deck cut fuel to the second engine. And we dropped another several hundred feet straight down.

What happened next was somewhere between eerie and amazing. All of a sudden, all of the shaking and pulling on the plane stopped ... and it was dead quiet.

We were in the eye of the storm. And it was remarkably calm. We only had two engines, and what turned out to be a very long flight back to home base. But at that moment it was intensely calm.

In the Gospel, Jesus says, "the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force."

It should be no surprise to any of us that the world bears down upon the Kingdom of God and Her subjects with harsh winds and violent storms.

But elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus says: "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

So, although we may experience trouble or violence in the world ... the good news is that Jesus has conquered the world. And in the middle of all of this turmoil — there is Christ.

So today, as we approach this altar to receive the sacred Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us reflect on where we are in the storms of the world — safely in the arms of our loving Savior? Or going it alone without Jesus ... and suffering the violence unprotected by a Savior?

And ask to be led to that place of calm, that place of peace ... no matter what may be going on around us ... we are always safe ... always at peace ... in the presence ... in the company ... in the arms of Jesus Christ, Who has already conquered everything by His Sacrifice.