

## AN EXPERIENCE OF GRACE

Captain Polvito's ship was in great danger of sinking. It had been weathering fierce storms for some time now, and was damaged. The crew had lost faith in the Captain, and he himself was becoming more and more depressed.

The Captain did not believe in God, but one evening, in the midst of a terrible thunderstorm, he wished that he did have faith; one might say it was a prayer, although it is difficult to call a prayer that which is not addressed to anyone in particular.

The time of storms passed, and Captain Polvito contemplated the beauty of the sea, the elegance of the birds and the majesty of the sun. He overcame his depression, and was beginning to be happy again. Land was near, everyone could tell, and optimism, or at least relief, was the prevalent mood.

One night the Captain was in his cabin, in the mystical state of mind that had become habitual in the previous days. It became clear to him that there was a wondrous harmony in the universe, that it was all too ordered and logical. He felt himself a part of this whole, and realized that he was an admirable man, a Captain who had saved his ship and his crew. At this point, the idea of God presented itself as the culmination of the contemplation of the universe. And straight-away God himself entered through the cabin window, or so it seemed to the Captain. In any case, God was there with him in the cabin, and Polvito experienced him as an oppressive presence.

The Captain thought he was going out of his mind; the weeks of tempest must have gotten to him. Yet, he could not believe he had suddenly become schizophrenic, so he decided to submit to this God. At first he thought, "Whatever kind of being this is, it is too powerful, so I will obey." Then he feared that he was in the grip of a sadistic, omnipotent monster. But he reasoned like this: "What would such a great being want with me, from me? Why would he want to hurt me?" He decided to trust, and felt much consoled. He was able to sleep well that night, and the next day land was finally reached.

Emilio G. Chavez