

God says he's with me

JACQUES DE VITRY (c. 1160/70 – 1240)

from “A Sermon for Pilgrims,” section 11

translated by ADAM F MCCUNE

Original Latin

Times mare propter ventos,
sed Dominus ut fieret tranquillitas ventis
 imperavit;
propter fluctus,
sed Dominus super fluctus ambulavit;
propter amaritudinem,
sed Dominus aquas Marath dulcoravit.
Propter latitudinem,
sed Dominus continet in utre aquas maris.
Propter profunditatem,
sed Dominus Ionam de ventre ceti vocavit.
Times vie pericula,
sed Dominus ait, ‘In via hac qua gradieris
 firmabo super te oculos meos’.
Qui etiam de se ait, ‘Cum ipso sum in
 tribulatione’.
Unde Bernardus, ‘Domine, si mecum es in
 tribulatione, numquam desint michi
 tribulationes!’

English Translation

You fear the sea because of winds that sweep,
But by his word our Lord has stilled the gale.
You fear the sea because the sea is deep,
But our Lord called out Jonah from the whale.

You fear the sea because the waves are high,
But our Lord walked on waves as if on land.
You fear the sea because the sea is wide,
But our Lord holds the sea within his hand.

You fear a sea as bitter as your tears,
But our Lord made the bitter waters sweet.
You dread the road, its robbers and its fears,
But God will watch you where you set your feet.

God says he's with me when my troubles grieve me.
If so, Lord, let my troubles never leave me!

Translation © 2025 Adam F McCune

Latin text: This edition of an excerpt from Jacques de Vitry's first *Sermo ad peregrinos* is based on two manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, one from the thirteenth century: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 17509 (saec. XIII, Paris), fols. 98rb-100ra (P¹), and one from the sixteenth century: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 3284 (saec. XVI), fols. 128va-131ra (P²). P¹ was selected for its early date, and P², despite its late date, because this ‘very meticulously executed copy... represents a manuscript tradition all of its own’ (Maier 2000: 74-75). These have been compared with Jessalynn Bird's edition (Bird 2008: 88-94) of two other manuscripts: Trento, Biblioteca comunale, MS 1670 (F55) (saec. XIII), fols. 98va-100rb and Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 503 (saec. XIV), fols. 368v-370v.