

LECTIO DIVINA FOR THE 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 9/2020)

First Reading: A reading from the first book of Kings 19: 9a, 11-13a

At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter. Then the LORD said to him, “Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by.” A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord— but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake— but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire— but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Commentary: After Experiencing great victory at Mount Carmel, Elijah had to run for his life for the fear of Jezebel, most wicked woman in the OT and sheltered at the cave of Mount Horeb. He was fearful, lonely, discouraged and depressed. He was asked to go and see the Lord who was passing by the cave on the mountain. Before Elijah came out of the cave, four events occur, three of them spectacular. (1) A great and powerful wind tore the mountain apart and scattered the rocks in pieces. But the Lord was not in the wind. (2) A dreadful earthquake occurred shaking even the foundations under his feet, but again, the Lord was not in the earthquake. (3) A sudden fire followed and still the Lord was not there. Wind, earthquake and fire were known to be manifestations of God’s presence” (Ex. 19:16, 18; Jud. 4:4-5; 2 Sam. 22:8-16; Ps. 18:7-15; 68:8; Heb. 12:18). But God was not in any of natural realities. (4) After the fire, Elijah heard a tiny whispering sound, a quiet voice, hushed and low. Elijah knew instantly that It was God! What a lesson for Elijah and us. God does not reveal himself only in powerful and miraculous ways. We tend to look for God in something big like church buildings, conferences, charismatic gatherings and so on. He can be found gently whispering in the quietness of our mind, heart, natural realities.

Responsorial Psalm 85: 9, 11-12, 13-14

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims; the Lord- for he proclaims peace. Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss.

Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

The Lord himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase. Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Commentary: The Psalmist asks God to revive people and to bring them back to spiritual life by pouring out his love on the chosen people. If we need revival in our church, family and personal life, we need to ask God to give us a fresh touch of His love.

Second Reading: A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 9:1-5

Brothers and sisters: I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Commentary: God chose the Jewish people as His own and the Jewish people saw this act like an adoption. They did not have any merit for God's adoption and it is God's grace to give them the status of His sons and daughters. They took this gracious act of God for granted which displeased St. Paul. In this reading, St. Paul expresses his concern for the shallow understanding of his Jewish brothers and affirms very strongly that only Christ can save us and nobody else.

Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew 14:22-23

After Jesus had fed the people, He made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Commentary: Jesus came walking on the sea. This gesture indicates that Jesus possessed God's saving power; for it was God who made a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters for the people of Israel (Isaiah 43:16). The disciples were naturally terrified to see Jesus walking on the water and considered Jesus to be a ghost. Jesus reassured them: "Take heart, it is I; do not be

afraid”. These words of Jesus remind us of the prophecy of prophet Isaiah: “Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God. . . . It is I who say to you ‘Do not fear, I will help you’” (Isaiah 41:10, 13, 14). Jesus reassures the disciples with the words: “It is I” . Jesus was present in their midst as one who saves, as one who liberates.

Peter instinctively responded to the reassuring presence of Jesus. He jumped into the sea and started walking on the water towards Jesus. Peter weathered the storm and the wind and shared the mysterious power of Jesus as long as his eyes were focused on Jesus, as long as he trusted in the power of Jesus. However, the moment Peter doubted, it was then he sank into the sea and cried out “Lord, save me”. It was quite strange for a fisherman to sink. It looks like Peter lost his profound sense of confidence to face the sea. Jesus was there to stretch out his hands to pull him out from the stormy waters. Peter’s life was a paradox. He was a man of faith and doubt, of courage and despair, of excitement and disturbance. However, his heart was in the right place. Despite all his failures he instinctively loved Jesus and passionately held on to the gentle hands of Jesus.

Personal Reflection: We can easily identify ourselves with Peter and the other disciples. We are also overcome with fear, some true, some imagined and some irrational. Our imagined and irrational fears are more powerful and controlling than our true fears. At times we lose the joy of the present moment by worrying about our future. Sometimes tears roll down our cheeks for reasons we are not able to explain. At times we conclude that we cannot face the challenges of life any longer. It is at these moments we are invited to believe in the promise of Jesus: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

William Barclay (Famous Biblical Commentator) in one of his insightful commentaries shares this story about St. Francis de Sales. St. Francis noticed a farm servant going across the farmyard to draw water from the well. He also noticed that before the servant girl lifted the overflowing bucket she always put a piece of wood into it. One day St. Francis went up to the girl and asked her: “Why do you do that?” The girl looked surprised and answered: “Why” to keep the water from spilling . . . to keep it steady”. Later on, St. Francis added his own insight to this story: “So when our hearts are disturbed, distressed and agitated, let us put the Cross into its centre to keep it steady”. Is it not true that the Wood of the Cross is our Peace? Jesus has the power to lead us gently through the storms of life. Jesus has the power to bring peace to our troubled hearts. Jesus has the power to instill courage and confidence into our broken lives. The question is: What is the source of Jesus’ power? Jesus’ source of power is found in his intimate relationship with God (Prayer).

Prayer: Father, we thank you for the wonderful gift of life! Your compassionate love is our hope and strength. Still, human as we are, at times we doubt, we falter and we despair. When surrounded by the storms and struggles of life we shift our gaze from your glorious face and remain focused on the pain and burdens we carry! Today, give us the inner courage to trust in your caring ways, to believe in the impossible and to accept in faith that You are in-charge of our lives