

19th Ordinary Sunday
August 9, 2020
“Escaping to God”

1 Kgs 19:11-13

Rom 9:1-5

Mt 14:22-33

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

How do we deal with the hardships of life? What is our attitude, our response, or reaction when life becomes extremely difficult? How do we react when our life is threatened or in imminent danger? In other words, how do we cope with the things that threaten to harm us or to destroy us?

We all want to live and to have the best life possible. The human race has progressed a great deal since Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon times. We have also learned that we are composite creatures – we have a body and a soul or spirit. Furthermore, while we know our body will die, most know, intuitively, that our soul lives on in some way.

Hardship and danger can take its toll and break us down physically and spiritually. While our bodies can endure a great deal of pain, real suffering takes place in our soul and spirit. Most can sustain physical hardship as long as they can maintain a positive and hopeful soul and spirit.

But even the spirit can break down if we don't have the right tools to sustain it and keep it healthy. How we have been affected by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic is indicative of how well we are – or are not – coping. Fortunately, the scriptures for today can be a great help for us as we face our present hardships.

The prophet Elijah lived a vocation of hardship. God commissioned him to convert the Chosen People and their king from the pagan gods and the pagan ways they had embraced instead of God and His ways. Elijah did some truly marvelous things. He foretold a drought and famine – He brought down God's fire from heaven with subsequent rain – He beheaded hundreds of false prophets – But his words went disregarded and unheeded. There was a price on his head. He considered himself a failure as a prophet, so he ran away!

Actually, Elijah made a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain where Moses encountered God. And there, Elijah himself encountered God. God asked him why he ran away. Why did he leave the land of his work? And Elijah responded that he was tired; he was discouraged, and didn't want to go on as a prophet the king wished to kill.

Consequently, God gave Elijah a tremendous demonstration of His almighty power – as well as where Elijah could truly find God.

But God was not in the tornado – He was not in the earthquake – He was not in the raging conflagration! Instead, God was best found in the stillness and in the silence. God could be heard in Elijah’s inner, spiritual self! Only then, with that inner power, could Elijah go back, find a successor, and ultimately go home to God and into a better world!

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus needed a break. He needed time alone with God. He had been thwarted in his first attempt to do so by the thousands of people seeking cures and his words. So, after feeding the multitude, Jesus went off alone – finally able to be with God.

However, the disciples were in dire straits. Separated from Jesus, they were losing out against the storm. Then during the fourth watch, the darkest hours before the dawn – the very time when Satan was believed to be most at work – Jesus came to them!

The terrified disciples thought it was a ghost! Nevertheless, Peter had courage. He believed it was Jesus, and was willing to risk walking out to him. But like ourselves, when we face great hardship, Peter began to falter; he began to doubt; he felt powerless against the wind and the waves. But Peter’s faith helped him. He cried out to Jesus for help. And Jesus saved him – Jesus grasped Peter; he eliminated the danger and he stilled the storm!

Brothers and Sisters, what do we do when we feel overwhelmed? Where do we go when life becomes impossible? Do we go to God? Do we call upon Jesus? Do we find a quiet place? Or do we curse and swear? Do we run to pseudo escapes or material distractions?

What we do and where we go, will depend upon what we have cultivated in our soul and spirit. Have we made time for God alone? Have we a quiet space within ourselves to be safe and still when the storms, the earthquakes, the infernos of life beset us?

If not, it is time to start or to renew what we had before. Time alone with God – listening to what God has to say to us – letting peace of heart transform our tired bodies and minds!

O Lord, our God, help us to become more aware of you at every moment of our life – May we become especially aware of you when we are in danger and most at risk!

Amen.

August 9, 2020

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