

## Homily of the Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time of Year A

In the first reading, Elijah ran away from Jezebel who was after his life. Scripture says that it took Elijah forty days and forty nights to reach Mount Horeb, the Mountain of God. He went into a cave and took shelter. Instead of God saying, "Welcome ye faithful servant," God put Elijah to further test and said to him, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the Lord, the Lord will be passing by." When Elijah stood on the mountain, a strong and heavy wind came rending the mountain and crushing rocks. This was followed by an earthquake, and after the earthquake was a fire. Elijah remained where God told him to stand. It was after the fire that God's presence descended in a tiny whispering sound, and God sent Elijah on another phase of mission. The following was God's conversation with Elijah (1 Kings 19: 13-16):

*A voice said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" He replied, I have been most zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant. They have destroyed your altars and murdered your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my life." The Lord said to him, "Go back! Take the desert road to Damascus. When you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king of Aram. You shall also anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king of Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you."*

The following points are worth noting:

First, when things were going rough for Elijah he went looking for God. Elijah made the tough and long journey to meet God.

Second, Elijah remained steadfast and persevered during the strong and heavy wind, the earthquake and the fire.

Third, Elijah was not reluctant to continue another mission God sent him, not minding his disappointment that God was silent when Jezebel was after his life.

Is anyone going through the same experiences as Elijah? Are you going through rough times in the hands of some people? Are you being attacked by enemies? Are you going through strong and heavy wind, earthquake and fire? Elijah teaches us to have unwavering faith in God, even if it appears God is silent or absent. Do not veer off God's path for any reason. Elijah teaches us patience and perseverance. Elijah teaches us how to make a fresh start. Elijah teaches us not to get stuck with failure, but courageously make a fresh start. If we get stuck in our failure and disappointments, we will be blind to a fresh and a new mission God has for us.

We need to realize, too, that being a good Christian does not mean that one will not have difficult trials. Sometimes we say, "But I am doing everything right, why me?" Sirach 2:1-6 tells us, "My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of adversity. Cling to him, do not leave him, that you may prosper in your last days. Accept whatever happens to you; in periods of humiliation be patient. For, in fire, gold is tested, and the chosen, in the crucible of humiliation. Trust in God, and he will help you; make your ways straight and hope in him."

The Gospel tells us how the boat in which the apostles were travelling was being tossed by waves. When Jesus appeared, he did not calm the waves. Rather, he told the apostles to "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." This shows that the fact that a problem situation is on, does, not mean God is not present. God is present and working out a solution. All we need to do is to take courage, and not to be afraid, believing that God is doing something in our favor.

Peter requested Jesus to permit him to come to him. Jesus granted Peter's request. Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. As long as Peter focused on Jesus, he continued to walk on the water towards Jesus. But when he removed his focus on Jesus and saw how strong the wind was, he became frightened and began to sink. Peter, however, cried out to Jesus, who stretched out his hand and held Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Jesus took Peter into the boat, and only then the wind died down. No matter how bad the situation is, as long as we have confidence in ourselves, and trust in God, God will see us through. But if we doubt ourselves and doubt God, we will sink.

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