

## Homily of Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time of Year A, 2020

In the first reading, Elijah had escaped from Jezebel who wanted to kill him. 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. God did not say, "Welcome, good and faithful servant;" rather, God put Elijah to further test. God 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:

*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" (1 Kings 19: 13-16).*

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 disappointments and frustrations.

In the second reading, St. Paul voiced out his frustration, "... 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 people, my kindred according to the flesh." Elijah made a similar statement while on his way to Mount Horeb, "Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness, until he came to a solitary broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death: "Enough, Lord! Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

In one way or another, we are all going through strong and heavy wind, earthquake, fire and heartbreaking frustrations as were Elijah and Paul. These great fathers of faith teach us to have unwavering faith in God, patience, and perseverance. They teach us not to give up, but to press on. They teach us to make a fresh start if that is the way to go.

In the Gospel, the boat the apostles were travelling with "was being tossed by the waves, for the wind was against it." It was also night, and they were miles away from offshore. In their fear, they did not recognize Jesus. They thought he was a ghost, and became more terrified. Jesus said to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Many of us can relate to the experience of the apostles. Many of us are afraid. Some of us are scared stiff. Although it appears to be night, and there appears to be smell of death and ghost everywhere; Jesus says, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

We can, also, relate to Peter's experience. Many times, we desire to follow Jesus. In fact, we start off very well. But when strong wind arises in form of trials and temptation, we forget Jesus who is walking with us and direct our focus on the trials and temptations. Then, like Peter, we sink into the trials and temptations. We are, indeed, men and women of little faith. We doubt a lot.

It's not every time that God divides the sea for us to walk through on dry ground. Sometimes, according to God's divine plan, he allows us to walk several miles on water to get to the shore. Only faith sustains us and keeps us afloat while we walk on the water. If we lose faith and become frightened, we will sink. Let us all cry like Peter, "Lord, save us." Let us believe that he will come to save us as he saved Peter. As I conclude this reflection, Bob Fitts' song, "He will come to save you," comes to my lips:

*Say to those who are fearful hearted,  
Do not be afraid.  
The Lord your God will come,  
And with His mighty arm,  
When you call on His Name,  
He will come and save you.*

*He will come and save you,  
He will come and save you.  
Say to the weary one,  
Your God will surely come.  
He will come and save you,  
He will come and save you.  
Lift up your eyes to Him,  
You will arise again,  
He will come and save you.*