

Faith in the Power of God

In the First Reading for this Sunday, Elijah was in seclusion in a cave on Mount Horeb when God told him that He was coming. First, there was a great and terrifying wind. But God was not in the wind. Then there was a terrible earthquake. But God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a great fire. But God was not in the fire.

After all this, Scripture says that there was 'sheer silence'. Other translations of the Bible use the words: 'a light murmuring sound', 'a still small voice' or 'a gentle whisper'. And Elijah knew that the Lord was there so he covered his face and went out to meet Him (1Kgs 19: 9, 11-13).

Unlike previous instances when God appeared in a pillar of cloud or in a burning bush, Elijah had his divine encounter in sheer silence when he was alone. And this is what can happen to us when we take time to sit in silence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. We have our own divine encounter. We allow the Lord to speak to us, not in a thundering voice but in a light murmuring sound or in a gentle whisper.

But sometimes God does appear in a tumultuous situation. In the Gospel, a violent storm came up and the disciples were caught out at sea in the middle of the night. They were afraid that the boat would go down but then they saw Jesus walking out to them on the water. At first, they thought He was a ghost but then Jesus called Peter to come to Him.

Peter, impetuous as always, immediately jumped out of the boat and began to walk toward Jesus. He was making good progress until he realized what he was doing and succumbed to doubt and fear. Then he began to sink into the water. It is like when we are rock climbing. Things are going well until we look down and realize how high we are. Then, we think about the consequences of the big fall and we lose confidence and freeze.

At least Peter had the presence of mind to call out to Jesus with renewed faith: 'Lord, save me!' (Matt. 14: 22-33). And Jesus extended His hand to save him. This incident showed that Peter was able to do the impossible when called by Jesus. But the spiritual power was disrupted when Peter gave in to fear and doubt. However, when he called out to Jesus, Christ saved Him. This is a message for each us. No matter how many times we have not trusted in Jesus, we can still call out to Him: 'Lord, save me!' and He will help us in our need.

We live in unprecedented times. We've heard this word 'unprecedented' so often that maybe we're getting a little tired of it. But it is true. We are living through a pandemic the like of which the world has not experienced in more than one hundred years. We have the resulting economic crisis which has led to the largest job losses and economic impacts in modern history. In addition to these crises, we have the racial crisis, the geopolitical crisis, and the climate crisis; crisis upon crisis.

We know that there is so much that we have to do to solve these crises. We may be so overwhelmed that we give in to doubt and fear and desperation. We may feel that we are in a predicament where there is no way out.

The Gospel story shows us that Jesus joins us in the turmoil of the world. He does not hold Himself above us. Like Peter, we need to keep our faith in Jesus and He will

help us. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and ask Him to calm the storms in our world and the fears and doubts within us. We need to do what we can and then put our lives in the hands of God.

Recently, we heard of the passing of John Lewis, a civil rights activist in the United States. He worked tirelessly his entire life to gain equality for African-Americans. Even when he was a teenager, he firmly believed that his efforts meant something and were effective. Eventually, John was proven to be correct. John was a devout Christian who believed that he must contribute his efforts but that, ultimately, everything depended on God.

Let us keep this message in mind. Let us have the courage and fortitude to do what we can to improve the world while placing everything in the God's hands. Let us always remember that the bridge between the limitations of human effort and the infinite power of God is faith.