

**Frustrating, Wonderful,  
Necessary Silence**

*A Missionary Commentary on the  
Sunday Readings*

**Sunday Readings**

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Psalm 85:9ab+10, 11-12, 13-14

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

[USCCB link to the Sunday Readings](#)

Silence can be frustrating.

There are many times when words fail a person sent out on mission, after arriving at another country, and trying to learn the language, the ways, and the lifestyles of the culture of the people we live among. Such moments of silence may feel awkward, as we anxiously try to remember our language lessons and vocabulary while maintaining some kind of flow of conversation.

Elijah, a prophet himself, utters no word in today's first reading, but he recognizes God's presence in a "sound of fine silence," and responds with the same gesture that Moses occupied on Mount Sinai—veiling his face before the divine presence. Silence could be something holy.

While the disciples in the boat had a lot to shout about, in a cacophony of fear and distress, Matthew tells us in today's Gospel reading how Jesus calmed them down with three words that echoed from the time of Moses, words that God had used in speaking to his messenger: "It is I."

Moments of silence allow for deep and attentive listening, and the sensing of the helpful presence of God in our limitations, while allowing our partners in conversation to fill in what is missing, at times bringing in a new and rich perspective on the subject and teaching us new terms.

Friendships can blossom from such quiet, respectful moments. In the midst of the storm of emotions that is often typical of a person's long-term adjustment to living in a land that is new to them, a quiet experience of reassurance and 'fine silence' now and then can make us deeply grateful for the meeting of "kindness and truth" at those times, as our psalmist puts it, where God graces us with a little faith. That sinking feeling becomes gratefulness for a helping hand, as we go forth.

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## **Notes on the Sunday Readings**

### **First Reading**

Unexpectedly, we hear in today's first reading that the dramatic manifestations of God's nearness that Moses experienced—wind, earthquake, fire (see Exodus 19: 16-19)—now only precede the divine presence that Elijah is commanded to draw near to. The sign of his presence in this case is a “sound of fine silence.”

### **Psalm**

The holistic perspective of the Psalmist considers that the salvation that comes from the Lord will benefit all of Creation—including his people, and the land, making this psalm a suitable prayer for rain and a bountiful harvest.

### **Second Reading**

Paul confesses how painful for him it has been to see that most of his fellow Jews rejected Jesus, while recognizing as well that the privileges of Israel are still in effect, since God will never go back on his promises.

### **Gospel**

Jesus does the things that God did in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament)—walking on the water (see Ps 107: 23-32, and Jonah 1) and rescuing those who are close to drowning (Ps 69). His disciples thus proclaim him as the Son of God.

*Notes and commentary by Fr. Bob Mosher,  
a member of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban.*

**Please pray for the missions.  
God bless you in all the ways you **Go Forth...****



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