

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

GOD'S QUIET VOICE



SUNDAY READINGS:

I Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Psalms 85:9-14

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

LISTENING TO GOD'S WHISPERS

Our first reading today brings us key insights from the prophet Elijah. He lived nine centuries before Christ and is a key figure in Old Testament history. Elijah gives us a profound lesson of how God often works and comes to us.

Elijah won a fantastic victory on Mount Carmel over 450 false prophets of Baal; the event turned the hearts of the Israelites back to Yahweh. This angered the wicked Jezebel, wife of King Ahab; she sought to kill him. Elijah needed to run for his life; so, he flees to the wilderness to escape the death threats. He collapses in exhaustion; he voices his frustrations and complains to God; he even asks that God would take his life!

Encountering God. Yahweh then instructs Elijah to stand on the mountain, because “the Lord will be passing by.” So, God sent a mighty wind which broke the rocks in pieces; next came an earthquake and then a fire. Yet, God’s voice was in none of these. Finally, there was a “tiny whispering sound,” a “still small voice,” a “gentle whisper.” And, Elijah heard God’s voice!

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The point of God speaking in a “still small voice” was to show Elijah that the Lord’s voice need not always be accompanied by dramatic revelations or manifestations [wind, earthquake, fire]. Yes, God is often a “whisperer.” Frequently, we can best hear his voice in moments of quiet reflection, when we are alone with our thoughts and meditations, when we are quiet and take some time for solitude.

Facing Life’s Realities. All of us battle our busyness and distractions; we confront our emotional stresses, exhaustion, doubts, fears, anger, grief and anxieties. We may get overwhelmed by our commitments and obligations [not bad in themselves]. But, such stressful realities and emotional chaos in our lives can keep us from walking in friendship with God. Indeed, Satan may seek to use these many distractions in his effort to have us “tune out” from the voice of God.

So, how can we “tune in” to God’s voice, that “gentle whisper” of the Lord? We should realize that God’s Spirit is already speaking in whispers in the events of daily life, in our simple routine. God uses our human connections and experiences to communicate. We can hear God as he speaks through the beauty of his natural revelation in creation. His voice can be heard in our conversations with other people and family members, in all our personal relationships.

Imitating Elijah. Like Elijah we need to escape to the mountain, which can be any quiet space which puts us in a reflective mood. Where is your mountain? Do you spend time there regularly? Do you allow God to whisper his message and show his tender love to you? Do you seek to hear God’s voice above life’s daily noise? Scripture advises us: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). We join Peter in today’s Gospel, crying out, “Lord, save me!”

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading: I Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

We read the Old Testament to appreciate how God prepared for the coming of the world's savior, Jesus Christ. Elijah was a key figure in this dynamic history. We hear how Elijah had to shelter in a cave on Mount Sinai or Horeb. Elijah hears God's message in a simple "tiny whispering sound," not in spectacular events or flashy manifestations.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 85:9-14

Today's psalm response expresses our plea: "Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation." The Lord comes to bring peace and salvation; indeed, it is the Lord himself who gives us his benefits. We pray that we will experience God kindness and tender care in *all* of life's diverse circumstances and events.

Second Reading: Romans 9:1-5

We continue reading Paul's heavily theological letter to the Romans. Here Paul is addressing the question of the Jews and the Gentiles. Generally speaking, the Jews were not accepting Christ, and the various local churches, as at Rome, were increasingly becoming composed of gentile converts. Paul concludes that God is with everyone, asserting: "Blessed forever be God who is over all"!

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

Today's Gospel follows that of last Sunday on the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. This narrative is a truly dramatic, almost frightening, story of Peter and his struggle to endure in faith. We are invited to have faith which does not falter—even in times of trial, troubles, and worries. These circumstances should not cause us to "sink" beneath all of life's challenges.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► **Living in Joyful Hope**, ► **Exploring Vatican II Treasures**, and ► **A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis** (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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