



19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A – August 13, 2017

We live in an age when the explosion of knowledge is surpassed only by the explosion of noise. The first reading today (I Kings 19:9a, 11-133a) reminds us of the importance of silence in our lives if we want to find God and listen to what God wants us to hear.

Elijah looked for God in the strong and heavy wind that was crushing rocks before his eyes, but God was not there. He looked for God in the awesome power of an earthquake, but God was not there. He looked for God in the roar and the heat of fire, but God was not there. Then, he heard a tiny whisper and the sound of silence. And there, he found God.

Sometimes we too look for God in the wrong places. Some scientists tell us today that we don't need God anymore and looking for Him is a waste of time. "Spend time in silence if you must", they say, "but you won't find God in silence."

There are indeed some kinds of "silence" where you won't find God. That is true. Anthony de Mello, an Indian Jesuit priest, told his contemplative monks on one occasion when they were complaining about the construction noise outside their chapel, "Silence is not the absence of noise, it is the absence of self." That's the kind of "silence" where God is found.

The second reading today (Romans 9:1-5) is from St. Paul. He reminds us over and over in his writings that here on earth we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Recall the words of Oswald Chambers, "Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading." The "One" who is leading is Jesus.

The gospel passage today (Matthew 14:22-33) relates the marvelous story of Peter walking on water during a storm at sea; a good example of trusting the one who is leading. It's safe to say we won't be invited to do what Peter did. And yet, if you think about it, we all experience the storms of life that are uniquely our own, and we need to walk through them more often than we would like. So in a sense, we are like Peter. We need to trust our Lord so he doesn't have to say to us what he said to Peter - "O you of little faith, why did you not trust me."

Recently, a friend of mine sent me a prayer that addresses some of the storms that human beings experience. They are not at all like Peter's experience at sea. But walking through those storms is like "walking on water" in a sense. Allow me to share it with you.

"Heavenly Father, Help me to remember that the jerk who cut me off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and is rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children. She is "walking on water in her storm. Help us to trust you Lord."

"Help me to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slow through the store aisles and blocking my shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got last week this will be the last year they go shopping together. They are "walking on water" in their storm. Help us to trust you Lord."

Put a pen to paper and write the final paragraph of this prayer based on your own experience. When it's your time to "walk on water in a storm", trust our Lord. He will help you.

