



Christ in Our Neighborhood

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prayer

Eternal Father,
we praise You for sending Your Son to be one of us and to save us. Look upon Your people with mercy, for we are divided in so many ways, and give us the Spirit of Jesus to make us one in love. We ask this gift, loving Father, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19: 9a, 11-13a

Elijah was hiding from his enemies in a cave on the very mountain where God handed down the Law to Moses. God announced that He Himself would be passing by for a visit, but Elijah was not comforted by this announcement.

His work had not been going well, and the Boss was on His way to meet with him. Would He be coming to help or to judge?

First, the tearing wind, crushing earthquake, and raging fire indicated judgment. But God was not in these frightening signs. Instead, He came in a tiny whispering sound. Although Elijah was frightened enough to hide his face, he was drawn out of the cave to God. Why? Because God did not come in judgment. He spoke gently to His faithful servant from His throne of mercy. Consequently, Elijah was graced with the courage to continue in his calling.

When we are truly open and receptive to the messages and movements of the Holy Spirit in our own lives, like Elijah, we are likely to be greatly affected and moved by our loving God. Our most profound encounters with God begin in tiny stirrings discovered in quiet intimate moments shared with Him. The Holy Spirit slips in quietly in these moments and, with remarkable power, takes possession of our hearts.

Question

Have you set aside time to be still and truly listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit?

How can you tell whether the whisperings you hear are from God?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 9:1-5

Like Elijah, Paul struggled with ministering to a stubborn, difficult audience. He shows a deeply emotional concern for the future of his own people.

Paul lived in a time when Jews, Christians, and Gentiles comingled, working their way through differences in faith, traditions, language, and culture. Paul depended on the Holy Spirit to guide his conscience and his words. Led by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, he realized that these very different groups were part of the same family and that they could all claim a share in the inheritance promised to Abraham. Even with their differences, the very same Holy Spirit who guided Paul's teachings was leading each of God's faithful on the path to salvation. St. Paul wrote,

"there is one body and one spirit...one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."(Eph 4:4-6).

Whether in Europe, in Africa, Asia or elsewhere, the structure of the Mass is the same, but each place has its own atmosphere because it lends its unique language, culture, and music to the celebration. Our unity in faith is not weakened by our diversity. It adds a richness that enlivens it and makes it whole. We stand together in Christ as one faith family, called by His grace into community where we pray "Our Father" in unity as one Church.

Question

Has there been a time when worry for someone you care about has brought you closer to God? Closer to your faith family?

Over the next four weeks, we will explore the Four Marks of the Church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

This week, we focus on the first mark, the One Church.

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Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

Why was Peter the only disciple to step out of the boat? He had grown more in faith and love. His firm belief in Jesus' identity as the Son of God gave him courage to trust Christ enough to risk his life. Once Jesus got into the boat and the storm ceased, the other disciples found enough faith to state without a doubt, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

When we allow our focus to shift from God to our problems or fears, we weaken our connection with Him. This could lead us astray from His purpose for our lives. The power we receive from the Holy Spirit is far greater than worldly problems. By focusing on His power instead of our problems, we invite Him to work miracles in and through us, as He did for Peter.

Peter's path is exemplified in the Latin phrase "lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi" (how we worship reflects what we believe, and determines how we live). Our worship, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leads us to our faith and trust in God, and ultimately to our mission as part of the one Church.

The more we believe, the more we respond to His call, and the more intimately we experience His exquisite love. And the more we experience His love, the more we trust Him and His perfect plan for us.

Question

In the storms of life, how long do you wait to call on Jesus? Do you try to think your way out of problems or rely on rescue from others before turning to Jesus?

This Week's Task

- Reflect intently at Mass as we pray: "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."
- Set aside 10 minutes each day this week to invite the Holy Spirit into your heart.
- Seek a way to grow in "oneness" with the Church: Join a ministry in your own parish.

Group Prayer

The group prays the following:

Lord Jesus Christ, at your Last Supper
You prayed to the Father that all should be one.

Send Your Holy Spirit upon all
who bear Your name and seek to serve You.

Strengthen our faith in You,
and lead us to love one another in humility.

May we who have been reborn in one baptism
be united in one faith under one Shepherd.

Amen.

Continue with Psalm 85

Psalm

**Response: Lord, let us see your kindness,
and grant us your salvation.**

I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD — for he proclaims peace.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear
him,
glory dwelling in our land.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your
salvation.**

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your
salvation.**

The LORD himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your
salvation.**

Conclude with an Our Father