

19th Sunday per Annum - A
I Kings 19:9a, 11-13a;
Romans 9:1-5;
Matthew 14:22-33
Little Flower - 8/13/23
Revised Encore - 8/7/11

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today Liturgy invites us to reflect on where and how we experience God.

In today's first reading, at the mountain of God, Horeb, God was not to be found in the strong and heavy wind or in the earthquake or in the fire. "*After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound,*" and it was in the tiny whispering sound that God was found.

I think most people today find it harder to believe in God, to believe in Jesus, than ever before. One of the reasons for this is because we live in a noisy, chaotic, confused world. Likewise, we struggle when God does not act as we think he should act, for example, when he allows innocent children to suffer terribly and to die young, when he allows so much violence in our world. Therefore, most of us would like a dramatic sign of God's presence, power, and activity that would make faith or belief easy.

Where do we find the tiny whispering sound in which we find God? We find God, first of all, in the very human Jesus. "*The Word became flesh and lived among us*" [Jn. 1:14]. To the shepherds, the angels announced, "*this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger*" [Lk. 2:12]. At the Last Supper, Jesus said to Philip, "*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*" [Jn. 14:9b].

Where do we find the tiny whispering sound in which we find God and Jesus today? Today we find God and Jesus in his Word. The Scriptures, which we read in our homes, proclaim in our Liturgies, and study in our Bible Study and Faith Sharing groups, are ordinary human words that have become the Word of God. God is also to be found in the simple words of our prayers of thanksgiving, praise, petition and contrition, especially the Lord's Prayer. Today we find God and Jesus in the sacraments of our Church. Ordinary human words and simple elements are an integral part of each of the sacraments. Likewise, God and Jesus are also to be found in the service and simple gifts we give to those in need, for example, canned goods on Thanksgiving Day and the Giving Tree gifts at Christmas.

In this parish year of the Eucharistic Revival, we emphasize Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, through the words of consecration, a little bread and a little wine become the very Body and Blood of Christ. In his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*, St. Pope Paul VI wrote, "But there is another way in which Christ is present in His Church, a way that surpasses all the others. It is His presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist....for it contains Christ Himself" [38]. When we see or receive the Eucharist, we see or receive Christ Himself in sacramental form. This is why both the celebration of the Eucharist and Eucharistic adoration deepen our encounter with God, with Christ.

My brothers and sisters, today we also find God and Jesus in human experience and human relationships. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus promised, "*Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst*" [18:20]. At the Last Supper, Jesus promised to send his Holy Spirit to live within us. In human relationships, God is to be found in softly spoken words of affirmation, thanks, forgiveness, need, and love.

Finally, God and Jesus are to be found especially in the heights and depths of our human experience. In today's Gospel, for example, on a stormy night, Jesus was present to his apostles in their fear and terror. Sometimes our most profound experiences of God and Jesus are when we feel most alone and surrounded by darkness. However, St. John's First Letter is also a powerful reminder that because God is love, wherever there is love, there is God. Therefore, some of our most profound experiences of God and Jesus are when we feel most connected with others, when we are most loving and most loved, and surrounded by light.