

Commentary on the Readings for Today, August 13, 2023

The 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the past few weeks the Readings used various symbols to illustrate the meaning and power of the Word of God such as mustard seed, yeast in flour, a pearl, etc.--all things that are partially hidden and take time to be discovered, evaluated and appreciated. In the Readings for today, God reveals Himself in ways that mankind would never have thought of. Together they ask us a question: "Who is God to you?" or "Where do you find God in your life?"

In the **First Reading**, from the *First Book of Kings (19:9-13)*, we learn that the Prophet Elijah is running away from his homeland because he fears for his life. He is discouraged to the point of wanting to die. God calls on him to remember his mission. He feeds Elijah with earthly food and then stations him outside a cave in order to reveal Himself to the prophet. A gale-size wind develops, but God is not in the wind. Next is an earthquake, but God is not there either. Then fire nearly consumes the mountain, but God is not there. These natural phenomena are all traditional signs of God from the past, but no longer. Next Elijah is engulfed in silence and it is here that the prophet hears God who leads him to safety. Do you ever spend time in silence to hear God?

The **Responsorial Psalm (85:9-14)** tells us that we must "listen" to what the Lord wants to say to us. We often make the mistake of "talking" too much in our prayers and listening too little. God will reveal Himself if we are willing to spend the time in faith listening for His voice which can come at any time or place and in any form. In other words, we must learn to listen with our heart.

In the **Second Reading**, from *St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (9:1-5)*, we hear Paul lamenting with great sorrow the stubbornness of the Jewish people who would not accept his teaching about Jesus even though Paul related Jesus' teaching to the great things the Father did for them. If St. Paul were here in our land today, he would probably feel the same way because many people who call themselves Christian do not listen and do not understand the teachings of Jesus Christ and yet they do nothing about it. How sad! Christ reveals Himself to those who earnestly search for Him.

The **Gospel Reading** is from *Matthew (14:22 -33)*. This passage follows immediately after the one for the previous Sunday. It is the story of Jesus walking on the water and Peter asks if he can do the same. Peter was looking only at the spectacle of the miracle and not the miracle-worker, Jesus. Many times Jesus revealed His divine nature to the apostles in order to substantiate who He is. This was necessary because much would be expected of the apostles in the near future. We have the benefit of knowing all that God did for His people, the Jews, and through Jesus, the Christians; but do we really know who God is? We can read the Bible from cover to cover, as some people do, and still not know who God is or His divine Son, Jesus. A true understanding of God in Jesus Christ can only come to us through *faith*, which is planted in everyone in the Sacrament of Baptism; but it is up to us to nourish and develop this gift through the Eucharist, prayer, study and *listening*. Something to think about during your prayer time this week! **MFB**