

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#)

[Reading II: Romans 9:1-5](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 14:22-23](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/081323.cfm>



The first reading presents a key event in the ministry of Elijah. (Elijah is one of the two main prophets in the books of Kings. His successor, Elisha, is the other. We met Elisha in the first reading in week thirteen.) Elijah ministered in the northern Kingdom of Israel between 900 and 850 BC. He challenged practices of introducing the worship of the Canaanite god Baal. Baal was a fertility god who could ensure good crop and livestock production.

In the previous chapter (I Kings 18), Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a duel to see which God could act. It is a beautiful story of God answering prayer, but the violence against Baal's prophets is gruesome. Elijah then flees the area as Queen Jezebel vows to do the same to him. Elijah walked 40 days and 40 nights to the mountain of God, Horeb, where God met Moses and gave him the ten commandments. It is here that we read about Elijah waiting for God.

The strong wind, earthquake, and fire were previous signs of God's presence and action. The Lord's presence was made known this time through a tiny whispering sound. Elijah needs to be attentive and aware of all the experiences in life. God does manifest in powerful ways all the time. Even the most ordinary may offer a chance to encounter God. Like Elijah, all disciples are called to be aware and attentive to God's daily presence.

After many significant events or experiences, Jesus makes the disciples get into the boat while he spends time in prayer. Prayer helps one stay grounded and keep things in perspective. Jesus regularly connects with the Father in prayer so that he can be faithful to the mission on which he has been sent.

In ordering the disciples to proceed without him, Matthew reminds the early community and each of us of who are journeying without Jesus visibly present that Jesus is present. The disciples were on the lake without Jesus as the storm came up. Each of us is on a journey in life, and many storms or challenges arise. These storms may be financial, health-related, or in relationships. Jesus invites Peter to step out upon the water and offers him a hand when he begins to sink.

The ancient understanding was that one should be afraid if you see someone or something coming across the water. It is either the Evil one, and you are in trouble, or it is God, and you may be in greater jeopardy.

The Gospel presents Jesus coming to the disciples in their fear and distress. Paul's statement last week is worth remembering: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8: 38-39)

The letter to the Romans enters a new focus with chapter 9. Paul is struggling with the fact that many of the Jewish people have not recognized Christ nor followed him. It greatly pains him that after all the gifts God gave them, their adoption, the covenants, the law, and the worship of one God, they have not recognized the greatest gift from God, Jesus the Messiah and savior.

The Catholic Church respects God's call to the Jewish people and the covenants that God has established with them. Covenants are permanent commitments, and God is faithful. We join them in listening to the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) and in giving thanks for all that God has done. We also pray that they grow in their awareness of God's continuing presence and action in Jesus. We join them in working against the evils of injustice, racism, poverty, and particularly anti-Semitism. We share the belief in the one God, in common moral principles, and concern for the poor and marginalized.

**Themes:**

God's presence in one's life

Faith and Fear

Revelation

Quiet and Reflection

God's covenant with the Jewish people

**Reflection Questions:**

What are some of the events, things, places, or people that help you connect with God?

When have you experienced a storm in your life (health, employment, relationship) and wondered where God is? How did Jesus reach out to you?

Have you experienced being distressed that others do not share your faith interest?

Have you attended any synagogue services? What was your experience?

**Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that we may recognize God's presence in both the extraordinary and ordinary events of our lives so that we may cooperate with God more fully

For a renewal of our faith: that we may keep Christ as the center of our attention and never tire of calling out for God's saving help when challenges arise

For freedom from fear: that we may hear the voice of Christ calling us to "not be afraid" and learn to turn to God in every circumstance that is beyond our control

For the Jewish people, recipients of the promises and covenant, and bearers of great hardship: that they may ever deepen their relationship with God and remain faithful to the One who has called them

For the opportunity to be quiet: that God will lead us to moments of silence so that we may hear the whispering sound of God and the deepest desires that God has placed in our hearts