

August 9, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Welcome to the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time!

I invite you to celebrate the Word of God by taking time to read and reflect on the message of the Holy Spirit for you during this celebration.

## **FIRST PART – SCRIPTURE READINGS**

### **Reading 1 [1 KGS 19:9A, 11-13A](#)**

At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter. Then the LORD said to him, “Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by.” A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire—but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

### **Responsorial Psalm [PS 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14](#)**

**R. 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.**

### **Reading 2 [ROM 9:1-5](#)**

Brothers and sisters:

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law,

the worship, and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

**Alleluia CF. [PS 130:5](#)**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

I wait for the Lord;  
my soul waits for his word.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel [MT 14:22-33](#)**

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

## **SECOND PART – REFLECTIONS/APPLICATIONS**

### **First Reading**

#### **Small Voice**

In Matthew 11:25-26 Our Lord Jesus Christ intimated to the Father, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will." Our Lord has just revealed a spiritual insight into how we can win his approval and approval of the Father. This understanding is reinforced further down in chapter 19:13 when the children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them. However, when his disciples rebuked them the Lord quickly told them, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 19:14) The first requirement to win God's friendship is to be a child of God. As a child of God, we need the qualities of a childlike confidence: trust, faith and purity of intentions. These qualities are reflections of God's gracious will that we all inherit through the Spirit's gifts in our own baptisms.

In the Reading, the prophet Elijah came to a cave to get some rest. Previous to this, he was already overwhelmed with so many tasks he had accomplished to fulfill what was commanded by God. At one point, he wished that God would take his life. Physical fatigue started to set in and he started to give up by allowing hunger to take over his life by sleeping with an empty stomach. Twice the angel woke him up and gave him food. Finally, in the Reading God commanded him to stand on a mount in order to meet him. In this encounter, God did not manifest himself in his traditional theophanies from which Elijah hid in the rock; rather he manifested himself in a “small voice”. This manifestation signals a transition in which God’s inspiration would come largely through less spectacular means and eventually through Our Lord Jesus Christ. As Our Lord re-echoes the “small voice” of God to Elijah, he continues to lift our spirits when we too are overwhelmed with our commitments in life: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Mt 11:28-30)

## **Second Reading**

### **The Holy Spirit’s Witness**

Paul’s background and his past can be both his strength and weakness in the ministry. There was no doubt from the very beginning of his conversion to Our Lord that he was to become a great apostle. His calling according to his testimony directly came from Our Lord himself: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” (Acts 9:4-6) After this Our Lord instructed him to a meeting with a disciple, Ananias who would lay his hands on him. Our Lord had previously revealed to Ananias about Paul’s calling: “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” (Acts 9:15-16) Upon seeing Paul, Ananias laid his hands on him while he pronounced the following words: “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 9:17) Thus, Paul officially received the Holy Spirit according to the will of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Reading Paul clearly invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit in him when he was made to speak on his own behalf to those who doubted his missionary works when ministering to the Gentiles. (Rom 9:1-2), (Rom 8:26-27)

## **Gospel Reading**

### **The Confession of Peter**

During the celebration of the Holy Eucharist this comes to us quite easily: “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, . . .”. But if we look back at how it came out as part of the fullness of truth of our faith, it was not that easy. In fact, even as a church we did not

formally make it official until the council of Nicaea in 325 AD declared it's truth against all heresies. (CCC 465) The Trinitarian truth that we now profess underwent a long history of challenges as God's word touched the hearts of men in all ages and times. When Isaiah made a prophecy about the Suffering Servant, the people had no understanding who he really was. They thought of him as a warrior, a political liberator. Opposite to this common understanding about the Messiah Isaiah describes him "like a sheep led to a slaughter". (Is 53:7)

Even the apostles, before Our Lord ascended to the heavens, were thinking of him as a liberator who would restore the kingdom of Israel. (Acts 1:6) Often during his time with his apostles Our Lord revealed himself to them as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, but they could not simply comprehend this truth and assent to it by their own understanding. In fact, when he asked them: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?", (Mt 16:13) it was only Peter who got the correct answer. Our Lord quickly pointed out that such knowledge is revealed to him not by flesh and blood but by his Father in heaven. (Mt 16:17) In the Reading, Mathew is telling us for the first time that the Apostles addressed Our Lord as the Son of God. (Mt 14:33) (CCC 454)

## **REFLECTIONS/APPLICATIONS**

The narrative of the Book of Kings was intended for the Jews of the Babylonian Exile in 6 BC. As a historical book the narrative begins with King Solomon's ascendancy to the throne of the united Israel from his father David. The narrative relates to the parallel series of successions of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. After several successions of kings in Israel (Northern Kingdom), the prophet Elijah was sent by God to prophesy to King Ahab. The beginning of the prophecy of Elijah was to warn the King of the impending punishment for Israel after long years of infidelities of the kings and the people beginning with King Solomon. The task that God gave to Elijah was so daunting and at many times put him in dangerous situations. As a prophet, Elijah developed a very special relationship with God which earned him the title "father of the prophets". (CCC 2582) This special relationship with God brought him to the heights of his ministry with many wonders and blessings. Through him God had shown his power through the miraculous works he performed to answer the needs of the people and to bring their oppressors to justice. In the end, God gave him the privilege to escape physical death by taking him both body and soul into his kingdom. (2 Kg 2:11)

In the First Reading, through the prophet Elijah we discover the playfulness of God in the prophet's life. This playful character of God is a special quality that he too is looking into the hearts of his faithful. The small voice that spoke to Elijah at the entrance of the cave is a personal revelation that God longs to manifest an intimate connection behind the spectacular events that happened in his life. In Paul's conversion, Our Lord became his personal voice through the Holy Spirit that connects himself to Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20) By the same token, Peter's confession is also a revelation that can only come from an intimate longing of God to reveal himself as a person through Our Lord Jesus Christ. (Mt 16:16)

Let us now examine ourselves with the following questions in order to deepen our understanding of the message of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In the Priestly Prayer of Lord (Mt 11:25-26) and in his encounter with the children (Mt 19:15) he personally indicated simplicity, childlike confidence, trust and faith as important virtues to win his approval. This type of connection was also expressed by God when he spoke to Elijah at the entrance of the cave. Indeed, despite the seriousness of life with all the responsibilities and commitments that go with it, God reminds us that life is not a burden. When was the last time I laughed my heart out? Can I identify the moments when God is talking to me from within with a child's voice?
2. In Mt 11:28-30, Our Lord Jesus Christ offers himself as our refuge when we are wearied and find life burdensome. Do I first talk to him and confide in him every time I have a heavy heart? How often do I talk to him? Do I ask him to lighten the burdens of those I personally know in my life?
3. Paul's testimony of his conversion relates to us the initiative of Our Lord, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4) His response was a total turn-around from being persecutor of Our Lord to his being apostle and minister to the Gentiles. In response to those who doubted him because of his past life, he addressed them boldly by invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 9:1) How do I respond to people who ask derogatory questions about my faith? Do I have the boldness to appeal to the presence of the Holy Spirit whenever someone questions my motivations in my church ministry?

Fraternally yours through Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Fr. Roy  
Pastor