

Homily – Listen, Love, Trust

Introduction

I suspect that when it comes to our prayer life and the things we are asking for, many of us would like to hear God be a little louder. When we have an important decision to make, when we're worried about our children, when someone we love is sick, when our faith feels weak, we wish God would send a powerful sign, a booming voice, or a dramatic miracle that would remove all doubt. Elijah encounters the power of nature in the wind... Then an earthquake... Then a fire. But God is not in any of them. However, Elijah finally hears a tiny, quiet, whispering sound, and there he discovers the presence of the Lord.

God often speaks softly.

The problem is not with God's lack of volume, power or presence. The problem is that our lives are filled with noise. And because we are surrounded by noise, we miss the whisper.

My Friend Ellie

A number of years ago, I had an elderly parishioner as a neighbor. We had an apartment on the third floor, and she lived in an apartment on the bottom floor. She liked to remind me that we lived in the penthouse, and she lived in the basement. She had been a faithful Catholic all of her life. She had raised her children in the faith, sat by her husband's side as he was dying, faced health problems, and carried more than her share of life's burdens. She would talk about the many homes that she lived in always referring to them by number. I knew these homes were in Reading but never knew what street she was referring to. We used to host dinners, sometimes in our apartment and other times in hers. We would talk over dinner, especially about her children and their struggles with the faith... Those struggles broke her heart. She would tell me, "When I pray, I talk to God about my children, I wonder why God doesn't tell me what to do to help them!"

Paul – A broken heart

Paul knew about broken hearts. His heart was broken because his own people, the people he loved so deeply could not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Like my neighbor, each of us knows someone we love who struggles with the faith. A child who no longer attends Mass. A grandchild who is not baptized or has drifted away from faith. A spouse who struggles spiritually. And like Paul, we feel that heartache.

Learning to Sit Quietly

Learning to sit quietly and let God love us and wait on him to lead us is hard. Today we see Elijah standing and waiting at the mouth of the cave, and Jesus then withdrawing to the quiet solitude of the mountain to pray. This is an invitation to all of us... to quiet ourselves and be in God's presence.

The Gospel – Courage and Focus on the Lord

Our Gospel speaks to the many storms we experience in life. The disciples find themselves in a raging sea. The wind is fierce and the waves are crashing around them. And then Jesus comes to them walking on the water. Peter, impulsively, says, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Peter moves to the Lord while the other disciples stay safely inside the boat. It is easy to focus on Peter's rash behavior and look past the courage it took to get out of the boat. But Peter loves Jesus enough to take the risk and leave the safety of the boat. He loves Jesus enough to try. And for a few brief moments, he did the impossible... He walked on water. Sadly, he looks around him and sees the storm. And He begins to sink. He focused on the commotion and noise around him instead of looking to Jesus.

Our Story

I think many of us can relate to Peter! We start out trusting God. Then the diagnosis comes... The job disappears... The marriage struggles... The family conflicts grow... The financial burdens increase. And suddenly all we can see is the storm. And we stop looking at Christ. However, we should take note of how Peter responds when he is distracted by the storm... He prays one of the most honest prayers in Scripture: "**Lord, save me!**" And immediately Jesus reaches out His hand. Not after Peter proves himself... Not after Peter promises never to doubt again... But immediately.

The Hand of Christ

The hand of Christ is always reaching for us. The Lord does not wait for perfect faith... **He responds to honest faith.** Especially when our prayer is, "Lord, I'm scared... Lord, I'm confused... Lord, I don't understand... Lord, save me." And that is enough.

Something to Think About

So here is something to think about... Today's readings encourage us to keep loving, to keep praying, and to keep hoping. God's grace is always at work. The God who spoke in a whisper to Elijah, who reached out His hand to Peter, is reaching for our hearts and the hearts of those we love.

Conclusion

So, what is the message for us?

- **First, make time for silence.** Turn off the television... Put down the phone... Step into church... Start by giving God five quiet minutes. You will be surprised by what you hear in the silence.
- **Second, keep your eyes on Jesus.** The storms are real... But Christ is more real. When fear begins to overwhelm you, repeat Peter's prayer: "**Lord, save me.**"
- **Third, never stop praying for those who have drifted from faith.** God has not stopped reaching for them. And your persistent joyful witness may be the instrument that moves them to reach for his hand.

My friends, Elijah teaches us to listen, Paul teaches us to love, Peter teaches us to trust. And must always remember to anchor our life in this truth: **God is closer than we think**. As Catholic's we are blessed to have Christ in our Church, in the tabernacle and on the altar during communion every day. He is present in the whisper. He is present in the storm. And when we begin to sink, His hand is already reaching for ours.