

HOMILY FOR 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME MATTHEW 2017

1. Where is God, Is there a God?
 - a. Seems to be a common question today
 - b. There are a lot of public, openly atheistic groups today
 - i. Some so convinced, try to evangelize their atheism
 - c. Not hard to be an atheist or to question existence of a loving God
 - d. So much evil in world, dictators, nuclear bombs, famines
 - e. If we work those out for ourselves, there may arrive the more personal issues
 - f. For many, life is good, we obey the commandments, we go to church regularly, thanking God
 - g. Although we would never consciously say it, in the back of our mind we begin to think God owes us for our goodness
 - h. Suddenly a crisis hits: we get a serious illness, some close loved one dies, a marriage becomes difficult or even breaks up
 - i. We are faced with the question, where is God, why is He doing this to me, why is He letting it happen, does He really care?
2. This is where we meet Elijah
 - a. He has just successfully convinced the people that the prophets of the god, Baal, are false prophets
 - b. Now the king is angry and out to kill him, and he is running for his life
 - c. He needs to reassure Himself, that God really is guiding Him and backing Him
 - d. He goes to Mount Horeb, mountain of God because her God gave Moses the 10 Commandments
 - e. Looking for a powerful God who can destroy his enemies
 - f. But God is not in the raging fire, He is not in the destructive wind, He is not in the earthquake
 - g. When does Elijah know God is present, in a tiny whispering sound
 - h. Elijah's experience suggests that God use powerful wonders like the pagan gods to reveal Himself
 - i. He is usually seen in quiet moments of faith rather than wondrous great happenings
3. Is this just the God of Old Testament, seeming rather helpless?
 - a. Jesus walking on water in middle of a storm seems at first to be a powerful wonder
 - b. When looked at in context, there is a lot more to it
 - c. Jesus has just learned of the death of John the Baptist at the hands of King Herod
 - i. John has been a powerful presence in the life of Jesus
 - ii. Not just a cousin but a witness to Jesus special relationship with God

- iii. John in baptizing Jesus gave Him the experience of God announcing to Jesus that He is the beloved Son
 - iv. John encouraged his own disciples to follow Jesus
 - v. John was a powerful preacher preparing the way for Jesus
 - d. Jesus looks for a chance to grieve and to pray
 - i. Going off to a spot in wilderness, does not work
 - ii. It must have been a favorite spot for Jesus, people anticipate the spot
 - iii. Jesus feels obligated to pray and to heal the sick
 - iv. At end of day Jesus sends the disciples across the lake, while he goes up the mountain to pray
 - e. While on the lake, the boat is being tossed around by waves while fighting a wind
 - i. Disciples see Jesus walking toward them on water
 - ii. Fearful, disciples think He is a ghost, but Jesus reassures them it is He
 - iii. Peter rather boldly challenges Jesus: if it is really you, command me to come to you on the water
 - iv. Jesus obliges him by saying “come” and Peter gets out and starts walking
 - v. While focused on Jesus, Peter is fine but suddenly he is distracted by his instincts as a sailor and fisherman
 - vi. Here he is on the water in the middle of waves being whipped up by winds and call outs to Jesus save me
 - vii. Jesus grabs his hand and makes simple statement “O you of little faith, why did you doubt
- 4. Like the disciples we have been called by Jesus to put our faith in Him
 - a. He sends us, like the disciples, on a journey to the Father
 - b. On that journey, we will face headwinds
 - c. we can be atheists, we can be believers or anywhere in between
 - d. Life is filled with storms and difficulties, it always has and always will
 - e. Elijah realized God is not in the raging fire, the earthquake or destructive wind
 - f. God is present in the quiet center of everything
 - g. God chooses to be with us in Jesus, not to protect us from the storms and challenges of life, but to know that He will help us stay above water as we walk with Him