

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A
August 10, 2008

Readings: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33

God's Will, Not Our Own

Do you have faith in Jesus? Would you be willing to get out of a boat into a storming sea trusting in the Lord to take care of you? --- Neither would I. Actually, it would be a pretty silly thing to do. It would take a certain level of presumption. Peter trusted Jesus, at least for awhile, and was able to walk on water, but first Jesus called and invited him to do so. Jesus hasn't called us to walk on water, so we probably shouldn't try it. And that's a big difference.

We need to trust Jesus and have faith that He will do what He has told us. We need to have faith that, if Jesus is calling us to do something, that He will give us the resources to fulfill that calling; it may be a religious vocation, parenthood, or a career transition. We must first know God's will for us and then have confidence that He will help support us as we agree to do His will. If we choose to follow our own will, there is no guarantee God is going to help us. If God calls me to walk on water, He can make it happen. If I decide to walk on water, I'll probably drown; I'm not a very good swimmer.

Today's gospel is a reminder about the importance of faith in Jesus, but it is also a reminder to spend some time trying to determine God's calling in our lives; both in the big things and in the little things. It's about spending time in daily prayer to hear God speaking in the quiet of our hearts.

Sometimes we get caught up looking for signs and omens to give us direction; maybe it's a lightning bolt or some occurrence that appears to be miraculous. And, yes, God sometimes does get our attention in these ways. But usually our encounters with God will be much more like what we heard in the story of Elijah in our first reading. God was not present in the wind or the earthquake or the fire. He was present as a tiny whispering sound, and Elijah covered his face with his cloak out of reverence. We, too, should bow our heads in reverence and kneel in the presence of God listening for a tiny whispering sound letting us know God's will. Sit quietly in your room or in Church and listen without speaking. There is a time for reciting formal prayers. There is a time to express our needs and problems to God. There is a time to reflect on God's message by reading Scripture. But there is also a time to sit quietly and just listen. It's hard to do, but worth the effort.

If we listen to God's will and try to follow it, then we can calm our fears knowing that Jesus will take care of us. Last week's gospel told how Jesus had compassion on the people. He healed them, preached to them, and fed them by multiplying the loaves and fishes. Today we hear that in the evening, after that long hard day, Jesus sent his disciples ahead of him in a boat while He went up to pray. While He prayed, He did not forget His disciples, the men who had answered His call and left jobs and families to follow Him. Instead He came to their rescue with these words: ***"Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid."***

Take time to discern what God wants you to do; what you ought to do, not what you want to do. And then have courage to act on that knowledge. Be confident knowing that God will be watching over you. And when things seem dark and stormy, listen and Jesus will say quietly to you what He said to His disciples: ***"Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid."***

Deacon Joe Hulway