



AMDG
NINETEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
9TH AUGUST 2020



‘Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.’

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty ever-living God,
whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call our Father,
bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts
the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters,
that we may merit to enter into the inheritance
which you have promised.

In the readings this week, Elijah and Jesus both seek out quiet places to pray alone. They reveal an ever-present God who reaches out to us and brings peace, especially amidst the storms of our own lives.

The *First Reading* sees a dejected Elijah finding a place of solitude. There he recognizes and responds to God’s still, small voice in the gentle breeze, rather than in the more dramatic events of wind, earthquake and fire.

The *Psalmist* asks for the Lord’s saving help as well as listening to his voice – one that speaks of justice and peace, mercy and faithfulness.

In the *Second Reading*, St Paul shows his love for his fellow Jews, agonizing because most of them reject Christ. Paul is ready to be cut off entirely from Christ himself, if that would help his Jewish kinsfolk recognise Christ as their Lord.

The storm in Elijah’s life is echoed by the storm in the *Gospel*. We see the disciples overcome their fears and doubts as they eventually recognize Jesus. Seeing the power of his presence, they proclaim their belief in who he is: ‘Truly, you are the Son of God’.

The events of recent months may have made us more aware of God’s presence in times of chaos. As we continue to move through these uncertain times, we pray for the grace always to be aware of God’s presence in our lives, and confident in the peace he offers us.

FIRST READING 1 KINGS 19: 9, 11–13

When Elijah reached Horeb, the mountain of God, he went into the cave and spent the night in it. Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord'. Then the Lord himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Just as Elijah found a place to rest alone and be called into God's presence, I too find my own quiet space. I share my desire with God to recognise and rest in his presence. If it helps, I may like to light a candle.

I take a few moments to notice how I am feeling and then try to settle into comfortable stillness.

I read the passage slowly, perhaps more than once, and pause over any word or phrase that particularly draws me.

I ask the Holy Spirit to help me see where I have sensed God's presence in my own life. Perhaps in people I see or meet, in nature, in my work, in events ...?

As I reflect on those times, I remember with gratitude any occasions when I have felt held in his protection and love.

Perhaps I can ask the Lord for a sense of that presence now.

There may also have been times when my attention has been drawn away from God, through being caught up in busyness, or fear, or ...?

I speak to the Lord from my heart about this, just as one good friend speaks to another.

I ask for any gift or grace I feel I need.

I pause ... is there anything else I want to say to the Lord?

As I bring my prayer to an end, I make a slow sign of the cross.

Glory be ...

GOSPEL MATTHEW 14: 22–33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come,' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God'.

As I prepare to pray, I entrust any distractions to the Lord, asking for his help in directing my full attention towards him. I may find it helpful to focus on my breathing as I slow down.

When ready, I read this familiar Gospel, mulling over any image or word that touches me today. Perhaps I identify with Jesus's desire to seek a peaceful place to pray to the Father.

I may like to place myself in the scene if this is helpful, pondering how this might be speaking to me now.

What fears are there as I battle the wind and waves? How do I feel as I see the figure walking towards me: reassured ... bewildered ... still more fearful ...? Perhaps this changes as I hear Jesus's familiar voice saying, 'It is I!'

How do I respond to Jesus's invitation to step out of the boat and go to him? Perhaps I now focus on watching and hearing Jesus and Peter ... and notice how I feel as Jesus gets into the boat.

I speak to Jesus about all of this and share with him any anxieties I have at the moment. I listen to what Jesus may have to say to me.

As I express my thanks for this time spent with the Lord, I end with an *Our Father...*

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace.

Psalm

'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.'

Gospel

Blessings on the King who comes, in the name of the Lord!

Gospel Acclamation

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

1 Kings 19: 9; 11–13; Psalm 84 (85); Romans 9: 1–5; Matthew 14: 22–33



Then came the sound of a gentle breeze ...



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