

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year A August 7, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

Our readings today are again beautiful and thought provoking. Last week our Lord tried to get away from the crowds and have some quiet time to pray and mourn the death of John the Baptist. The crowds kept coming to him, and he attended to their needs. He tried again today, ordering the disciples to get into the boat and dismissing the crowds, and then he went up the mountain to pray alone. It was in the quiet of the mountain top in the middle of the night that he found his Father.

I think of the first reading. Elijah had fled from Ahab and Jezebel, and came to the mountain of God, Horeb or Sinai, where God had made the covenant with Moses and the people. God told Elijah to go outside the cave and the Lord would be passing by. But Elijah did not find God in the strong wind or in the earthquake or in the fire. But he found him in the tiny whispering sound.

Are we any different than Elijah? Don't we look for God to come in some dramatic way, some out of the ordinary way, perhaps through miracles? Wouldn't we all like to have St. Paul's experience, to be knocked to the ground and told what to do? But God does not work that way. There was an ad put out by the vocation office of the archdiocese some years ago, and on it was a young man (it was actually Fr. Ryan Ruiz of Incarnation before he was ordained). He is sitting at a desk with a thoughtful look. The words on it read "God does not usually use trumpets when calling a man to the priesthood." God works in quiet ordinary ways, calling all of us to our vocation. Unfortunately there is so much noise in our world that we usually miss Him.

In the gospel the disciples got into the boat, which is often a symbol for the church. And in the middle of the night a storm came up, and they feared for their lives. Jesus came walking on the water, and said "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid." Then he said to Peter, "Come." Get out of the boat, leave the security of the boat, take a risk, and come to me.

That is what Jesus is telling us to do, to leave our safe and secure place and take a risk. I think of the second Vatican Council. John 23<sup>rd</sup> took a real risk, many in the Vatican thought he was crazy for calling a council. But John said, "Open the windows and let the fresh air in." Many of the bishops took risks, questioning the way things had always been done, suggesting changes, like using people's native language in the liturgy, inviting people to share power in the church. It led to many changes, and some chaos. It suggested that not everything was black and white, but gray is o.k.

I think of how we are all called to leave our security blankets and take some risks. Today three people decided to give up part of their weekend to come here for a brief retreat to prepare for the sacrament of confirmation. I think of a man in our parish who joined the Catholic Men's Fellowship. He began to meet regularly with some men of the parish he did not know, and began sharing prayer and part of himself with them. That is certainly leaving our comfort zone. I think of parishioners who finally decide to sign up for a ministry, whether that be Social Justice or St. Vincent DePaul, the Vocation Committee or Respect Life Committee.

One final thought. Peter, when he kept his focus on Jesus, did fine walking on the water. But then he heard the noise of the strong wind, and he looked down on the rough water, he took his focus off of Jesus, and began to sink. He cried out to the Lord to save him, and Jesus was there to save him.

If we have the courage to get out of the boat, if we keep our focus on the Lord, we can be sure that Jesus will be there to reach out and save us.