

Homily by Monsignor Michael Hazard

St. Joseph Church, 936 Lake Street, Kalamazoo Michigan 49001

19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

August 7, 2011

“Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.”

The prophet and the apostle, Elijah and Peter.

Elijah has made a mortal enemy of the queen of Israel, Jezebel. She has sworn to slit his throat. He runs for his life. But he is not running willy-nilly, without direction. He heads for the “mountain of God,” Horeb, or Sinai. He knows it as the place where Moses got direction for himself and for the People, the most identifiable place of God’s apparition to Moses. As much as for saving his neck, Elijah seeks God’s direction.

He finds a cave in the mountain. And there, God reveals himself to Elijah. God directs Elijah to the mouth of the cave. And there comes a storm-wind like no other. But God does not reveal himself in the storm-wind. There is earthquake followed by firestorm—but God is not revealed in these wonders. The text does not say, directly, how; but in a tiny whispering sound—a breeze perhaps; a voice?—Elijah recognizes the presence of God.

Elijah is a prophet. A prophet is one who speaks in the name of God. Elijah has already spoken for God, calling the people of Israel, the northern kingdom, back to true worship and away from the worship of false gods. But now he seeks God to know how to continue his service. He goes to the mountain to be in communication with God.

Now, **Peter**. The bold one. The one who wears both his faith and his fear on his sleeve. Peter is a fisherman who knows the big lake. He’s seen a storm before. He’s survived every storm he encountered. This one is a toughie. But what he now sees is what shakes him. There’s a figure coming upon them walking across the water. Someone cries: “It’s a ghost!”

But now a familiar voice comes: “Don’t be afraid. Take courage, it is I (!)” Peter’s words in reply indicate that he doesn’t know if he can believe his eyes. *And* his words open a way for Jesus to call him to faith. Peter: “Lord, if it’s really you, tell me to come to you over the water.” Jesus: “Come!”

The first steps, you might, think would be the most difficult. Still, Peter starts out well enough; but then he begins to focus on his own ability, his own power—which is zero in this scene—and he begins to go down. Finally, he calls out to the One with the power: “Lord, save me!”

Jesus saves. God saves. The Lord of Elijah, the Lord of the apostles is all about salvation. God intends for us to turn to him in our need. When we don’t know what to do, God want us to have confidence in him. When we are afraid, God is waiting for our attention. When our road gets slippery and unsure, when our problem-solving skills are not up to the chore at hand, when our will-power is not enough to overcome temptation: God waits for our call: “Lord, save me!” God can restore our peace, can bring us around to a fresh beginning, can calm the fearful storms and objectify the sources of anxiety.

Let’s take a minute right now, each of us, to pay attention to the Savior—to bring to God what’s on our own hearts; to begin again to listen, to see how God has dir