

HOMILY for 19th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Readings talk about looking for the Lord around us; that reminds of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

Four-year-old Brianna was at the pediatrician for a checkup. When the doctor looked in her ears, he asked, "Do you think I'll find Big Bird in here?" Brianna only giggled.

Next, the doctor took a tongue depressor & looked down her throat. This time he asked, "Do you think I'll find the Cookie Monster down there?" Brianna giggled again.

Then, the doctor put a stethoscope to her chest. As he listened to her heartbeat, he asked, "Do you think I'll hear Barney in there?"

"Oh, no!" Brianna replied. "Jesus is in my heart. Barney's on my underpants."

Anyway, if I ask, "Would you like to have a divine encounter," you'd say, "Sure yes!" Or, if I inquire, "Do you want to meet Jesus," you'd answer, "Absolutely yes!" As a faithful Catholic, most of us would want a divine experience or meet Jesus daily. We'd welcome any encounter with God or any opportunity to see Jesus in the world around us. For we need God to help us with our daily challenges. Moreover, if God is around us, we'd have a better chance of seeing a miracle in our daily life. That's why we pray daily & go to church often to increase our chances of experiencing a miracle. So, how can we see Jesus in our daily life? What does it take for us to experience a miracle every day?

The answers for those questions lie in this Sunday's readings. In the Gospel, we learn that the disciples were floating in a boat at sea in the middle of the night as Jesus walking on water toward them. But, they didn't recognize Him & thought it was a ghost. They were scared. Clearly they didn't know Jesus well after everything He did & showed them. He did one miracle after another & revealed to them that He's the Son of God. So, it shouldn't surprise them that Jesus could walk on water. Besides, Jesus had been with them for some time. They should know the way He walked or how He looked after spending hours with Him every day. Unfortunately, their vision of Him was still clouded by doubts & other worldly concerns. That's why He constantly told them to detach themselves from material things & everything else of this world. Once again Jesus had to remind them who He was & said, "Take courage; it is I. Do not be afraid." Evidently the disciples had a bad vision of Jesus; & that prevented them from recognizing their Master. Worst yet, it got them to misidentify the Lord & caused them to get scared because they thought it was a ghost.

In spite of his bad vision, Peter was allowed to check out whether it was really Jesus in front of him by doing the same thing the Lord had done, namely, walking on the water toward Jesus. But, apparently he had a strong doubt about his faith journey which caused him to sink amidst the wind & waves. He finally had to call out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out to grab Peter & pull him out of danger. As you can see, his faith in the Lord was shaken amidst the rough waters. He was about to let everything in life take over him & drown him. But, Jesus came to his rescue & save him. We can see the importance of having a good relationship with the Lord in this life. Without it, we'll feel overwhelmed by our life challenges & heavy crosses. We need to stay close to Jesus & recognize His presence in our lives. So, how can we tell if Jesus is near us? What's the sign of God's presence with us? The answers for those questions can be found in today's First Reading. Like us & the rest of the world, Elijah apparently was trying to figure out how to look for God. He wanted to know how to tell where

God might be. Some people might think the Lord would be present in a strong & heavy wind. But, he soon learned that the Lord was NOT in it. Others might assume the Lord would be in the powerful earthquake. But, he quickly found out that the Lord was NOT in that either. Still, some presume that the Lord might be hidden in the mighty fire. But, he quickly discovered that the Lord was NOT there either. So, where can the Lord be? To his surprise, he found the Lord in “a tiny whispering sound.” Elijah was so humbled & delighted by this discovery that he “hid his face in his cloak & went to the entrance of the cave [to listen to that whispering sound of the Lord a little better.]”

Sometimes, we mistakenly assume that God is present in some magnificent place, or awesome event, or bombastic speaker. But, God cannot be found there. We often get duped & misled by believing in those things. The truth is that God can only be found or discovered in “a tiny whispering sound.” In other words, we’ll have to tune out other noises & distractions in our lives in order for us to hear the voice of God/ “the tiny whispering sound.” That’s why we take time to pray or go on retreats to find some quiet time to be with God & push aside all the distractions. Those distractions could be material things, worldly ambition, politics, hatred, or violence in words & actions. Those things will give us bad vision & prevent us from hearing the voice of the Lord or seeing Him in our stormy life. Unfortunately, God’s people have allowed the distractions mentioned above to take over their daily life & keep them from hearing the voice of God & seeing the face of Jesus over the centuries. Lately they have totally forgotten about the importance of saving souls & let politics & violence take over the life of the Church.

In recent news, we’re told that the Knights of Columbus group in Washington D.C. misused the John Paul II National Shrine to host a politician for a wrong purpose; & the Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington D.C. Archdiocese reprimanded them for that terrible mistake. Next, a church militant group called St. Michael’s Media in Ferndale, Michigan made a video to attack the Archbishop by using the racist & derogatory language against him. My friends, how can church groups like the Knights of Columbus & St. Michael’s Media hear the voice of God & see the face of Jesus when they allow politics to take over the main & only mission of the Church, namely, saving souls? Have they forgotten all the schisms that have divided & torn the Church apart over the centuries? How can we all meet Jesus when we spend most of our time worrying about political issues instead of looking for ways to talk to Him & touch His painful nail-marks?

My dear brothers & sisters, Elijah was excited when he could hear the voice of God in “a tiny whispering sound.” Peter felt relieved when he could grab on to Jesus’ hand before sinking into the deep sea. We can learn from them & search diligently every day for ways to hear the voice of God & see the face of Jesus. Or, we can let politics & others worldly distractions give us bad vision & keep us away from our Lord & the Kingdom of God. The choice is ours!