

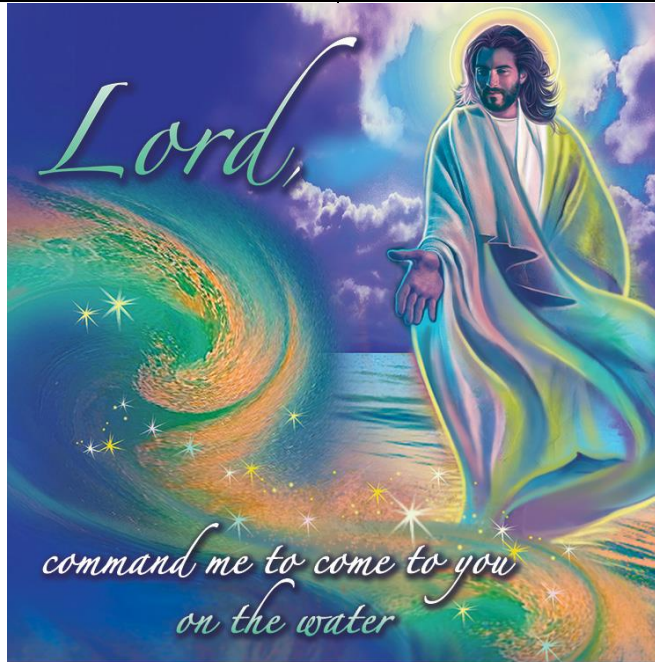
*I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for his word.*

Like Peter we too have often set out confidently across the waters of life. However, as soon as the winds of trouble rise against us, and the waves of adversity begin to buffet us, we lose our nerve and begin to sink. Lord, when our faith falters, as it often does, may we hear your gentle voice saying to us, "Courage! Do not be afraid."

Where do we find the Lord in our life? Today's readings point to two surprising places: the silence and the storm.

The first reading is a famous scene from the life of the Old Testament prophet, Elijah. Elijah had just come out a winner from a very dramatic religious contest. A pagan cult, sponsored by the Queen Jezebel, was spreading throughout Israel. Elijah, one of God's Old Testament prophets, challenged the pagan priests of this cult to a kind of duel, like the classic Western "High Noon." It was one man against many. Here, it was Elijah against several hundred pagan priests. The test in this duel was to see whose God could send down fire from heaven to ignite an offering on an altar. Of course, Elijah won. The people began to return to the true God, but Queen Jezebel didn't. Instead, she was furious and sent her soldiers to hunt Elijah down and kill him. This is the setting of today's first reading.

Elijah is in flight and goes to the holy mountain of Horeb to wait for the Lord to come to him. He looks for a sign of God's presence in the wind, in the earthquake, in the fire (all the manifestations of God that Moses experienced on that same mountain), but God was in none of those places. Rather He was in the air around him. So often, we tend to look for God's presence only in the extraordinary and the unusual. Of course, there's nothing wrong in seeing God at work in the extraordinary and the unusual. The problem comes when we think that God is only in the unusual and not in the ordinary, the everyday, the routine. Miracles, healings and visions have been part of the Church's life from the start. They are meant to get our attention and not to limit God's presence only to these extraordinary events. They are given to remind us of the abiding, every day, continuing presence of God.



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There is not only the silence: there is also the storm. The Gospel reading is not just about a storm on the lake but about the storms of life. You and I may not be caught in a storm at sea but we are all caught in the storms of life, whether those storms have to do with children, marriage, finances, health, emotional problems, work or other people. Our instinct when the storms come is to think that God has abandoned us. This Gospel teaches us that the Lord is with us even in the storm. Through the Sacraments, through the Church, through

our time of prayer, the Lord says to us, "Get hold of yourselves. It is I. Do not be afraid."

Regrettably, the storm is the time many people separate themselves from prayer, from the Church, from fellow Christians and try to go at it alone. Yet, those are precisely the times when we need to reach out to the Lord and be more constant in prayer, gather more frequently with fellow Christians and live the Gospel even more faithfully. So often, we focus only on a storm and the size of the waves, not on Jesus. We look only on ourselves, not on the Lord, and then we sink. But Jesus is there, through the life of the Church, reaching out to us in the storm.

Two places where every single one of us can meet Christ are in the silence and in the storm. Christ is in both.



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