

Homily: 19th Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: 1 Kings 19: 9. 11-13; Ps. 85; Rom 9: 1-5; Mt. 14: 22-33

“Why Does it Seem so Hard to Find the Living God in our Time in History?”

Today in the readings we see a fascinating encounter of the prophet Elijah with the living God. We also see Peter venturing out to walk on the water, moving towards Jesus, only to falter in the end because of his weak faith. These two events point to the reality of God and that He desires communion with us, but often we falter and fail to enter into that communion. **Why is that?** And what are the particular challenges of our modern time and culture that makes it sometimes quite difficult to encounter the living God?

1. **Exterior Noise.** I think it is safe to say that we live in the noisiest culture in human history: *cell phones going off, text messages and tweets; music blaring in the background in cars and on stereos, or in our headphones on the smart phone; the television is buzzing day and night clamoring for our attention; we have the internet and its sea of information at our fingertips; videos, videogames, DVD's, Netflix. etc.* All of these can be, and often are, a distraction to focusing on the “Higher Things” as the saints say. The **encounter** of the prophet Elijah with God in the first reading today is a lesson for all time. **We will not usually encounter God in the noise.** He is a God of peace and is encountered in the silence, in the small whispering sound that we will only hear - if we allow ourselves to enter into silence. It is not by accident that most monasteries in human history have been located in rural areas. The **holy silence** which we all are called to, regardless of vocation - *be creative if married with little kids* - means that we daily need to shut those noisy distractions down and allow real silence to be part of our life, e.g., try turning the radio off in the car and instead pray the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet, or just spend the quiet time communing with God. Reduce the exterior noise in your life and chances are you will encounter the living God more.
2. **Interior Noise.** For so many of us, it is not just the exterior noise in our lives that prevents us from encountering the living God who reveals Himself in **the whispers of life** (*little moments where we see true love at work in our families, little moments when things just fall into place, times when we are beaten down*

and then get a new surge of strength to go on in life, moments of reflection that occur when reading or walking outside in the beauty of nature), **BUT** we are also full of interior noise. **This is often an even more serious barrier to encountering the living God.** This interior noise is sometimes caused by unhealed and unforgiven sins/regrets of various sorts. We live in a time that has been categorized as an era where **the sense of sin has been lost**. We live in a **blame culture** - where few take responsibility for their actions; instead, we blame our parents, the environment we grew up in, our teachers, the priests, or “**the Man**” as the hippies used to say, for all of our problems in life. Rarely, do you encounter people who truly take responsibility for their actions and fess up to their sins - all the while trying to change and do better, in God. In fact, it amazes us priests when we encounter such a person: *Fr. I sinned, and I take full responsibility for it as I have free will.* Wow. Remember you only have to go to Confession when you have mortal sin on your soul, but all the saints recommend frequent reception of the Sacrament, in order to keep our souls spiritually clean and our spiritual vision unclouded. If we want to encounter the living God, we **MUST** take a radical inventory of our interior life and see what we need to change there – instead of playing the “blame game” - asking the Holy Spirit to show us what we need to see and the courage to change what we need to change. The two sins that most blind us interiorly are various sins of **pride** and **lust**. Something to look at when we do this inner inventory and go to the Sacrament of Confession.

3. **The ongoing solution. Prayer:** the deeper we grow in **prayer**, the deeper we appreciate and grow in **Faith**, and the more we **encounter God**. The two go hand in hand. Please take more time out every day to pray - resolve to spend at least 15 more minutes each day praying, and then see where the Holy Spirit leads you. If we have to get up earlier or go to bed later in order to spend that time with God in the **holy silence**, **please do it - you will NEVER regret it**. Why? Because our union with God in prayer is the beginning of eternal life - *the Divine Indwelling by grace will lead to the full Vision of the Trinity in the next life*: the ultimate joy of Divine love. God is calling us into **the Holy Silence**. Let’s respond generously.