

Living the Word: 1 Kings 19: 9,11-13

So often we long for a clear sign from God. The prophet Elijah was no exception. As the surviving faithful prophet he took on the rival prophets of Baal in a competition. Two sacrificial bulls were placed on wood to see whether Baal or God would answer first by igniting a fire. Baal failed to do anything, but God spectacularly lit the fire and then allowed it to rain after a long drought. It could not have been more dramatic and it ought to have been a triumph for faith in the one true God. But it wasn't! The wicked Queen Jezebel was unmoved and ordered Elijah's death and he fled and hid in a mountain cave. Elijah despaired and God summoned him outside where Elijah experienced wind, earthquake and fire, but without any sense of the presence of God. But when all was quiet Elijah knew the 'still small voice of God.' The times when God chooses to act dramatically are the exception. He prefers to be the constant 'still small voice' which is always there. Like the morning dew which creeps silently up on us, the 'still small voice' may be speaking to us without us even realizing.

From the Fathers: *Saints Pontian, Pope, and Hippolytus, Priest, Martyrs*

A letter of St Cyprian: Ineradicable faith

O happy Church of ours, lit up by the honour of God's kindness, now purified by the blood of our glorious martyrs! Once she shone white through the works of the brethren; now she has become purple with the blood of the martyrs. Among her flowers there bloom both white lilies and red roses.

Now let each of us strive for the highest of one of these honours. Let each of us be crowned either with the white crown of labours or the purple crown of suffering.

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God, whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call our Father, bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters, that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you promised. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

13th August 2023

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



St Matthew was a Jewish Christian, which is why his Gospel is immersed in the Old Testament. And any Jewish listener to today's Gospel would have been deeply alert to its strongly Old Testament overtones. Water in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is a symbol of chaos and disorder. It is dark and dangerous, the dwelling place of violent forces, the harbinger of death. Think of the creation narrative, Noah's flood, or the waters of the Red Sea consuming and killing the Egyptians. When reading today's Gospel have these scenes in mind and remember that water is the 'formless deep', representative of all that stands in opposition to God's intentions for his creation. This makes today's Gospel about more than the Lord stilling the storm and walking on the water. He certainly did both these things, but Matthew account of this goes deeper, goes beneath the surface to the theological meaning of this event in the earthly life of Our Lord. Christ is revealing his divine identity and authority. Christ is revealing that he is God. As God brings form to the formless, and order to the chaos, the Lord Jesus in his ministry is ordering God's creation towards its end; and in doing so he is anticipating the great 'stilling of the storm' that his death and resurrection will effect – when he inaugurates a New Creation through his Paschal Victory over Sin and Death. He will do this by allowing himself to be consumed by the storm and tempest of human violence and bitter, brutal rejection. Sin will consume him on the cross, and he will consume Sin thereon, swallowing it up in his ever greater mercy.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 14:22-33