

19th Sunday, Cycle A, August 13, 2017

Even though Peter believes in Christ, he still is troubled with many doubts and fears. Very distressed, Peter turns to Christ. Even though he only has a little faith, Peter is able to walk on the water towards Christ.

We may find it difficult to identify with St. Peter. So, I would like to tell you another story about a person going through a crisis of faith.

The middle-aged woman buried her face in her arms and sobbed.

“I don’t know what to do, Father. I have so little faith. What can I do that will help me to believe? I have recited tons of prayers. I have traveled to Fatima and to Rome. I have worked at the St. Mary’s food kitchen, to find out if I could see Christ in the poor and needy. I only saw faces that were dirty and hungry. I have searched for God everywhere. Where can I can God?”

The elderly priest paused and looked around. The setting sun shot golden rays of light into the room. Just outside the window, birds were twittering in the branches of a nearby tree. Off in the distance were voices of children at play.

The priest smiled and said to the woman: “The whole time that you have been searching for God, God has been searching for you. You don’t need to find God. If you would only stop and stand still, God would find you. You are so busy with your prayers, that God can’t get a word in edgewise. You are so filled with activity, that there is no room for anything else, no room for a sense of wonder and mystery, no room left for a delight in God’s creation. You don’t need to find God. If you would only stop and stand still, God would find you.”

When the elderly priest talks about standing still, he doesn’t mean that we should always remain immobile, frozen like statues. He doesn’t mean that we should eliminate all activity from our lives, that we should become hermits. What he means, above all, is an attitude of heart.

But it is true, that if once in a while, we become physically still and quiet, it is easier to become spiritually calm. That is why silence plays such an important part in prayer, just as important as the words. That is why moments of silence punctuate our worship together. For example, in the Mass, when the priest says the words, "Let us pray," we pause for a moment in silent prayer. Then, the priest says words to express what we have prayed in our hearts.

If only we stop and stand still, God will find us. If only we become quiet in our hearts, we will discover that God is already there. We will be like Elijah in the first reading of today's Mass, who hears God in the tiny, whispering sound. That sense of God's presence will empower us to step out boldly, to risk the impossible, to walk on turbulent waters. That sense of God's presence will lead us to Christ, who will calm the storms which rage within us.