

Homily of 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (August 12, 2018)

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah had proved that Baal was a false god, and that the Lord was the true God. Elijah also ordered the killing of 450 Baal prophets. Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, pursued Elijah to kill him. Elijah fled into the desert. As we read in the first reading, the angel of the Lord fed Elijah and got him ready for his journey of forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb for an encounter with God.

Elijah had expected God to intervene and stop Jezebel from coming after him but that did not happen. Elijah was so disappointed and heartbroken that he prayed for death. God was not offended by Elijah's prayer for his own death; rather, God sent an angel to provide enough food and drink for Elijah for his journey. God had his divine plans. I believe that God used Elijah's experience to bring him to Mount Horeb for a special encounter as never had happened before. Elijah's special encounter with God is in 1 Kings 19:9-18.

In our trials, let us not pray that we may die. Rather, let us pray for the strength to persevere, and that God's divine plan may come to realization. Being Christians or Catholics does not mean that trials and temptations will not come our way. We are not exempt from trials and temptation. But our faith is in Jesus' assurance, "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (John 16:33).

A story about St. Theresa of Avila comes to mind. It was said that the saint was on a journey and was caught up in a rainstorm. She slipped and fell into a ditch of mud. She was very disappointed that God had not granted her a smooth journey. She cried to God in her frustration, "If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder why you have so few of them!"

There may be persons who are brokenhearted like Elijah or very distressed like St. Theresa of Avila, or who are upset and murmuring like the Jews in today's Gospel. Let us feel the touch of the angel of the Lord and be strengthened as we receive the word of God and the Eucharist (the living bread). There is a song that says, "I have Jesus the son of God, why should I fear, why should I murmur."

Two Bible passages for our prayer and reflection:

"For though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit appears on the vine, though the yield of the olive fails and the terraces produce no nourishment, though the flocks disappear from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord and exult in my saving God. God, my Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet swift as those of deer and enables me to tread upon the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

"For the mountains to their bases are tossed with the waters; the rocks, like wax, melt before your glance. But to those who fear you, you will show mercy" (Judith 16:15).

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP