

Where do we find God in our life is a question both our first reading and the Gospel try to respond to, and come up with surprising answers.

The first reading show us the prophet Elijah just after he came out a winner in his contest with the prophets of Baal, but that has won him the enmity of Queen Jesabel, who is out to kill him.

So he's on the run, and flees to Mt. Horeb where he waits for God to give him a sign of what is to come. Hiding in a cave he experiences a fearsome storm, and earthquake and a fierce fire, but he is not able to recognise God in any of these. But then his attention is drawn to the still air around him and the very gentle breeze barely ruffling the leaves of a nearby tree, and there he recognises the presence of God, in the stillness.

So often we too tend to look for God's presence only in the unusual and the extra-ordinary. Not that there is anything wrong with seeing God at work in these, but we have a problem when we think that God is only to be found 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 beginning. They are meant to get our attention, but not to limit God's presence only to extra-ordinary events. They are given us to remind us of the abiding, everyday, continuing presence of God with us.

St. Thomas Aquinas had something to say in that regard, - informing us that God's work of sustaining the Universe, keeping it going every day, is as awesome as its creation. That's an insight of extra-ordinary power, for it brings God very close to us when we realise that God enables every one of our breaths and every beat of our heart.

Do we take time to meet God in the silences, or do we spend our time in looking only for supernatural fireworks? When we hear about strange and unusual phenomena here or there, the message is not to go there to find God, but to realise that the same Lord is a constant and sure part of our own life all the time, - in the silences.

Yet, it is not only in the silences that God can be found, but also in the storms. Today's Gospel is not just about a storm on the lake, but also 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, such as Donald Trump threatening to unleash Armageddon on the world. Our instinct when the storms come is to think that God has abandoned us. The 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.

Sadly, the storm is the time when many people separate themselves from prayer, from the Church, from fellow Christians, and try to go it alone. Yet, those are precisely the times when we need to reach out to God 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 the storm and the size of the waves, not on Jesus. We look only to ourselves, not to the Lord, and then we sink. But Jesus is there, through the life of the Church, reaching out to us in the storm.

We should remember that the Church, often described as a boat, is built not only for calm days but also for storms, not only for shallow creeks but for deep oceans, not only for a few people, but for the whole human race. We need to accept that the Church is a sturdy boat that has lasted a couple of thousand years and has helped billions of people weather gigantic storms. Just as in a storm we hang on to the boat even more tightly, we should do the same in our Catholic life when the personal storms come. There are many religious places and shrines in our world where people go to be inspired, renewed and revived in faith. These readings today teach us that there are two places where the Lord is present, that are part of every life, - the silence and the storm.

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

(Partly sourced: Captured Fire, Sunday homilies, Cycle A.; S. Joseph Krempa.)