

19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, 9 AUGUST 2020

Being the Beneficiaries of God's Kindness and Salvation

Dear brothers and sisters, Last Sunday, we dwelled on the theme, "The Providence of God is sure: The hand of the Lord feeds us, he answers our needs" (Psalm 145:16). This Sunday, the theme shall be, Being the Beneficiaries of God's Kindness and Salvation. We see examples of this in the lives of Elijah, Peter, and his companions. Both parties were in mortal danger and God saved them. Elijah, the prophet, was fleeing for his life. After he had eliminated 450 prophets of Baal, Jezebel, the wicked and idolatrous queen, threatened Elijah's life saying, "May the gods do thus to me and more, if by this time tomorrow I have not done with your life what was done to each of them" (1 Kings 19:2).

In the same vein, Peter and the other Apostles were in a boat that was in danger of sinking because of a violent storm. As he did with Elijah, God appeared to them in their moment of desperation. In both cases, God came to the rescue in ways they did not expect. God did not come through a mighty wind, earthquake or fire which might be considered the usual modes of God's revelation. Instead, he came to Elijah in a gentle breeze. He came to the Apostles walking on water. Of course, the Apostles were terrified, thinking he was a ghost, they cried out (Matthew 14:26). The Lord said, "Do not be afraid, it is I" (Matthew 14:27). At that moment, Peter said, if it is you, bid me to

come to you on the water. Our Lord replied, "Come." Peter started walking towards God. Seeing the mighty storm, Peter's faith waned and he started to sink. At that instant, in fear and alarm, he cried out, Lord save me! (Matthew 14:31). The Lord took hold of his hands and led him back to the boat. When they came to the boat, the wind died down. All in the boat exclaimed as if on cue, this man is truly the son of God.

This event was like a window to heaven! The people in the boat saw a glimpse of the divinity of Jesus! In a style of writing that is soaked in the Scripture of Israel, the Evangelist communicates that Jesus is Yahweh. Note Yahweh is the name revealed to Moses, "I AM WHO AM" (Exodus 3:14) is the same as "IT IS I" (Matthew 14:27) in today's Gospel. Note also that the only one who parted water and the people walked dry shod is God, the Holy One of Israel, Yahweh, El Shaddai (Exodus 14:21-22). It follows as night follows day that Jesus is God. Only God can tread on water (Job 9:8).

God came to Elijah and the Apostles in their moments of peril and saved them from impending doom. Can he do the same for me? Do I sometimes feel that God could be kind to some people but not to me? What is my reaction when I hear or read, "The earth is full of the goodness of God (Psalm 33:5, Psalm 119:64)? Do I feel that it might be true for some people but not for me? What is the genesis of doubt in God's loving care and providence? Addressing these questions touches on having a fundamental vision of God. How do I understand God? If I view God as partial,

precarious and unpredictable then I am bound to doubt his providence. If I think of his love as conditional then I will feel that I do not deserve it. The genesis of doubt or lack of trust in God is a wrong vision of God. This could stem from some childhood experiences uncritically imbibed which make all of life seem as a *quid pro quo*. Light shines in darkness, when I revise this vision and accept that God is greater than my conception of him. He is not limited to our finite perception. Remember that he did not appear in the usual or accustomed mode to the Prophet Elijah and the Apostles in their times of need. God was not in the mighty wind, he was not in the earthquake he was not in the fire. He came in a gentle wind. He came to the Apostles walking on water. Does God come to me when I am going through storms of life? What does it take to see him in such a moment? The answer is faith. Remember Jesus' words to Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"(Matthew 14:31). Illustrating this with a story, "Once upon a time, Catherine of Siena was tormented by a hurricane of impure thoughts. She reeled and prayed. At the end of that storm, she asked the Lord where were you when I suffered so much, the Lord said, I was within you. That is why you did not fall for the lust.

What can I do when the storms of life come my way? St Vianney the patron Saint of parish priests, counsels, "Ask for God's help with living faith and with a pure heart." That is my part, the rest is in God's hand. It is the Lord who calms the storms of life. Like the rest of the Apostles, I must stay in the boat and not jump into the water. I know that God will come into the boat of my life and bring the storm to a

whisper. May I conclude this homily with a song composed by Josh Groban - He raised me up:

When I am down, and, oh, my soul, so weary. When troubles come, and my heart burdened be. Then, I am still and wait here in the silence. Until you come and sit awhile with me. You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains. You raise me up to walk on stormy seas. I am strong when I am on your shoulders. You raise me up to more than I can be.

Are we beneficiaries of God's kindness and Salvation? Yes! For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for the sake of our salvation. The LORD proclaims peace. Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land (Psalm 85:10). Amen!