

**OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES**  
**Reflection for**  
**Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), August 9, 2020**  
**(May be used for Home Prayer Service)**  
**Dominican Friars, Swansea**

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*This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.*

**OUR SALVATION COMES FROM GOD**

In the time of the Old Covenant, the presence of God was expressed in certain frightening and terrifying ways. These include flood (Gen 7), fire (Ex 13:21; 1 Kgs 18:36-38), cloud (Lev 16:2). For this reason, the people could not come close to God but kept a fearful distance from him. However, in our time, God manifests himself to us in a new and peaceful way in our Lord Jesus Christ in whom we find our hope and salvation.

**Our Search for God:** In the First Reading (1 Kgs 19:9a.11-13a), Elijah went into the cave where he could be alone. While he was filled with the fear of Jezebel who wanted to kill him, the word of the Lord came to him to give him courage. In his state of fear, he searched for the God whom he had always called upon. He was instructed to go up the mountain to meet God. Elijah was accustomed to the many fearful sights and signs which were associated with the presence of the divine, but God rather chose to manifest himself to Elijah in a gentle and cool breeze. Thus, Elijah encountered God in a new way.

**Jesus, the New Elijah:** At the transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17:1-9), Moses and Elijah appeared as representatives of the Laws and the Prophets, respectively. With their presence at this event, they bore witness to the Passion Jesus was to go through which was to culminate in his glory. Just like Elijah in the First Reading, Jesus also went into a lonely place to pray, to commune with God. The seclusion of Jesus in prayer was not out of fear but out of love for his disciples who were the subjects of his prayer. While Elijah went on the mountain to unite with the divine and seek for help, Jesus went on the mountain in his divinity to help weak humans.

In Mt 16:14, we learn that there were some Jews who thought that Jesus was the new Elijah. Now, we recall that at the transfiguration (Mt 17:1-9), the disciples worshipped Jesus, and not Moses or Elijah. This teaches us that Jesus is greater than both Moses and Elijah.

**God Searches for Us:** The Gospel Reading (Mt 14:22-33) relates the frightening experience the disciples of Jesus had on the sea. They were

afraid that they were going to perish in the deep sea. There have been many times when, like the disciples of Jesus, the boats of our lives are far from safety. We feel that the wind of difficulties and tribulations are constantly hitting us from every side. When the water of trouble is up to our necks (cf. Ps 69:1), we cry out to God in utter anguish. Or like Elijah, there are many occasions in our lives when we also feel lost. All we want to do is hide and take shelter. Amidst these uncertainties, God searches for us in the depth of our sorrows. He comes to us and says to us, 'Take heart, my child. It is I. Do not be afraid.' What words could be more consoling?

**God holds us by the hand:** When Peter saw Jesus walking on the sea, he wanted to test his faith in Jesus. With faith, Peter walked on the sea like Jesus. His faith supported him to the point at which he began to sink. He began to sink because he entertained doubts and fear. Then he cried out to Jesus who stretched out his hand to save him. Peter represents the Church which is always in need of the help of Christ to wade through the turbulence of each historical era.

It takes courage which comes from Christ himself to accept the mantle of leadership in the Church. May our Church leaders be filled with the spirit of courage as they shepherd the flock of Christ in difficult moments. With Christ in the Church, we are sure that there will be calm and peace in the hearts of all people.

The experience of the disciples of Jesus on the sea also signifies our daily human struggles. The burdens we carry in life often shake the foundations of our faith. At that point, we begin to sink into despair when we think that there is no hope of survival. Yet, God does not watch us go into the depths of hopelessness. Rather, he stretches out his hand, holds us by the hand and leads us to safety. His fatherly touch soothes us and calms our fears. We are not afraid to hold his hand and look at his face in love. Surely, we can trust his plans for our lives. May we always reach to the protecting and saving hand of God who is our help and our salvation. Amen.