

19th Sunday Ordinary Time

When apple engineers presented the first iPod to the company president Steve Jobs, he held it in his hands, played with it for a while and finally he said, it's too big, make it smaller. (It was slightly over an inch thick) They said, " it was impossible to make it smaller." He thought about their response for a minute, looked around the room, and then walked over to a fish tank aquarium and dropped the iPod in and watched it sink to the bottom. When the Air bubbles started coming out of the iPod he said, see, there's still room inside of it. Make it smaller. They did and came back with the iPod that we know today, which is about a quarter of an inch thick.

Sometimes we may think that we are a finished product, that there is no room for change, no room for improvement, but Jesus says, there's still room for more, still room to make us more like Him. For us Christians, internal improvements only come after a lot of research and development, trial and error, falling down and getting back up, prayer and grace.

A few years ago I was talking to a captain in the army who was just starting to allow God to bubble up inside of his interior life. He went on a cursillo retreat which often results in the opening up of the Christian heart, which gives the person the courage to really look deeply inside of themselves and see where they are empty in some places, noisy or scared in other areas, and at peace in other areas. His cursillo set him on a path of spiritual insights and awakenings that continue to unfold for him and his family and his soldiers. For a few years after that he kept saying that he wanted to experience God like other people, he wanted to "see" God or to have a mystical experience of God, and he would get frustrated because God had not visited him in a way that he thought God should. What he couldn't see at the time was that either he just wasn't yet ready, or God had a reason to wait. He was still in the research and development stage. He still had too much bubble space inside himself.

Last week I met a seminarian who was studying for a new religious order called the Apostles of the Interior Life. My first thought was that someone who is pursuing a vocation named after the Interior Life would be seeking a contemplative or cloistered order where they could sit in silence and listen, and pray. That is part of what they do, but then they go out to parishes and give missions on how to encounter God. The Interior Life of the Christian is always about preparing for the next encounter. Preparing for their mission to go out and share Jesus with that next person that the Lord puts in their path. We never know when God will present that opportunity to us but it will come in a time and place when we don't expect it.

I was on a late night flight coming home last week and I was reading, Living Missionary Discipleship, but I was not in missionary mode. I was tired and not in the mood to talk about Jesus, so I tried to keep the cover of my book face down so no one could see it. As the plane started to land, the guy next to me said, so are you a missionary and I said, no! I'm a catholic priest. I knew the second that I said, no I wasn't a missionary, that I had messed up. Of course I am a missionary disciple. You are a missionary disciple. All baptized Christians are missionary disciples. That's why we get baptized. To go into all the world and spread the good news. He was a youth minister for crossings community church, and I felt pretty sure that he was underwhelmed with my reply. My old programming for what a missionary is or does, is a person or a couple who moves to Africa or China to live among people who have never heard of Jesus. Or Like the German nun, Sister Ruth Pfau, who just died at age 87, who spent decades of her life bringing the number of those in Pakistan suffering from leprosy from nearly 20k to 600. I used to think that was what qualified a person to be a missionary. But what about the guy next to me on the plane? I could have said I'm a missionary disciple in the Catholic Church. He could of heard how excited I am to be a priest at an amazing and vibrant parish in Yukon, Oklahoma. I could have shared that the Archdiocese is about to host the first international beatification mass at the cox convention center. And The week after that, again at the convention center, is an international Catholic evangelist, Matthew Kelly, from Australia. Instead I said I'm not a missionary, I'm just a priest.

Sometimes we can forget who we, and whose we are. We get so busy with the noise of life or noise of marriage or ministry that we forget to just stop, be still and listen to God.

1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter.

As far as caves go,

This is a nice cave. It's right on the Mediterranean Sea so it has a great ocean view with beautiful sunsets. The cave has several areas, or rooms but with the open concept design. As far as caves go this would be like a four star cave. Then the LORD said to him, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by." We can have an expectation of how God is going to look or interact with us. And when that doesn't happen we might think God didn't do it right so it must be my fault. Lord change my boss, my spouse, my kids or my priest, my president, my pope. We sometimes can think that God didn't change them so He obviously doesn't listen to me. But it's usually because we are too noisy inside our interior life to hear the answer. Elijah was standing on his front porch praying and waiting for God, a strong and heavy wind was pounding the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD— but the LORD was not in the wind.

After the wind there was an earthquake — but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake there was fire— but the LORD was not in the fire.

After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.

When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

The last place Elijah expected to encounter the Lord was in the tiny whispering sound.

The last place I expected to be called a missionary was on an airplane. God doesn't always show up when we want him too but we can always prepare ourselves better for when He does. By our baptism we are all missionary disciples. CCC 1547- the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. This unfolding happens when we have a going out mentality, a missionary is one who goes out into the storms and earthquakes and wildfires of people's lives. But the only way we can stay prepared to do that is if we spend time in the little whispers of the Lord, in prayer, confession, adoration, scripture and studying Gods word. The Eucharist.

When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water toward Him, he said, "Lord if it is you, command that I come to you on the water. Jesus said, "Come." Peter jumps out of the boat, walks on the water toward Jesus and then noticed how high the waves were and started to sink. Why did he start sinking? Why did the bubbles start coming out of Peter as he was going down into the water? Too much fear, too much doubt, too much of himself and too much looking around, and not enough keeping his eyes and ears on the lord. There are plenty of storms in our life. We may wonder if Jesus is around, we may wonder what he looks like and what he's asking us to do. We may even wonder if he is going to pull us up and help us get through the storm. But Jesus is always walking towards us, even before we look for him or ask for his help. Our job as missionary disciples are share what we know about Christ with others. But first we have to continue our relationship with Him. We have to pray, study, rest in the Lord, and listen to the still voice, and as we take the first step, trust that God will do the rest.

Is my world still stormy and shaky?

If it is, what voice am I listening to?

What is my mission in this life?

If I'm over inflated and filled with me then I'm bound to sink.

If I keep my eyes on the Lord, then my mission becomes how I get to show others how to walk toward The Lord.