

Homily for the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 13, 2017

"Lord, save me!" How many times have you prayed that prayer in your life? It is appropriate for almost anything, right? As a kid, you just broke your mom's favorite plate, "Lord, save me!" You failed to study for a major college exam, "Lord, save me!" You see red and blue flashing lights in your rearview mirror, "Lord, save me!" You forgot that today is your wedding anniversary, "Lord save me!"

We could go on, and I jest a bit. But if you look around at what's happening in our world right now, it is a good prayer, "Lord, save us!" If you look at the many divisions of Christianity that exist, some very hateful or judgmental of others, it is a good prayer, "Lord, save us!" If you look inside the brokenness in our country, it is a good prayer, "Lord, save us!" If you look into your own home - maybe a family illness, family division, family economics - it may be a good prayer, "Lord, save us!" If you look into your personal life and struggles, whether it be about forgiveness or addiction or depression, it may be a good prayer, "Lord, save me!" The statement from the second step of Alcoholics Anonymous would put it, "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." "Lord, save us!"

This litany of troubles and fears and problems are certainly as real as the waves of that threatened to drown Peter on the Sea of Galilee. "Lord, save us! Are you listening God? Where are you? And the answer comes in the *"tiny whispering sound"* that Elijah heard, but we are making so much noise that we can't hear it. We are keeping so busy that we can't see the Lord's hand stretched out before us or we are so certain of *our* way that we simply dismiss it, "that will never work." And we keep looking for God in the windstorm or the earthquake or the mighty fire - or whatever spectacle, political party, pundit or movement calls to us.

St. Paul is wrestling mightily in the second reading, *"I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart"* he says, because he wants to follow Christ's way in all things but he knows that may leave behind or separate him from his own people. Sorrow and anguish can come to us, too, from not wanting to trust or to let go or even, simply, to listen. We walk on the water at the call of Jesus' voice for a time but then we falter, we doubt, we get pulled back into "society" and we give in, "Lord, save me!" I was talking with an inmate at the prison recently who is looking at getting out soon and he's a little fearful because he doesn't want to fall back into the old ways and relationships that got him into trouble. That fear does not only exist with inmates, right? *"Lord, save me! Are you listening?"*

Instead of questioning whether God is listening, maybe we ought to pause to ask if we're listening: "I'm right here. I won't let you drown." That voice may come in a quiet conversation with someone you care for, it may come in a child's laugh or a stranger's smile, it comes in the Scriptures you hear, the Eucharist you receive and it may come in the wonder of creation that surrounds us every day. If we are listening.

Remember Ziggy? The little round cartoon guy that always seems to try hard but often doesn't quite make it. One of my favorite Ziggy cards has Ziggy standing up looking at the stars in the sky, his little round dog next to him. And as he gazes he sees a message written in those stars: "Dear Weary World, I love you." And Ziggy just sighs. "Lord, save us!" And, listening, the answer comes, "I already have. *"Take courage. Do not be afraid."* And, as we heard last week, *"This is my beloved Son, listen to him."*