



# Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 13, 2017

## God Calls to Our Hearts

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**W**e've been fortunate to make several trips to Hawaii. On one trip, we saw lava flowing from a vent on a volcano. I'll never forget it or the offerings of pineapples, leis, and other things native Hawaiians make to Pele, the volcano goddess. The volcano erupts when Pele is angry. When it is quiet, Pele has gone underground.

Great displays of power and destruction are often connected with divine activity, so it seems strange that the Lord doesn't appear to Elijah in

manifestations of wind, earthquake, or fire. Rather, God speaks out of silence, and his first words to Elijah are, "Why are you here?"

That's a wonderful question for us today. Why are we here celebrating the Eucharist? Is it obligation only, or is there something more?

I'd like to think we come to Mass to hear God calling to our hearts. Here we can meet God face to face in the word, in the priest, in each other and, most intimately, in the bread and wine that is his Body and Blood. We take him into ourselves so we won't be like Peter, who walked into the middle of a storm and began thinking the storm would destroy him like an angry god.

We gather at Mass so we can fix our minds and hearts on Christ, whose power is so great that it needn't manifest itself in destruction but who, with a word, can calm every storm and take us safely into his care. †

## A Word From Pope Francis

We all know that when water stands still it stagnates. There's a saying in Spanish that says: "Standing water is the first to go bad." Do not stand still. We all have to walk, to take a step every day, with the Lord's help. God is Father, he is mercy, he always loves us....He welcomes us and forgives us....He never tires of forgiving....He makes us rise and fully restores our dignity. God has a memory, He is not forgetful. God does not forget us, He always remembers.

—Address to detainees in a penitentiary in Isernia, Italy, July 5, 2014



## Sunday Readings

### 1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by.

### Romans 9:1–5

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit in bearing me witness.

### Matthew 14:22–33

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

*Why do we celebrate the Eucharist? Is it obligation only, or is there something more?*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When have you felt Jesus' presence most strongly in your life? Did it coincide with a difficult task or time of trouble?
- Which winds distract you from Jesus?



# Our God Speaks to Us

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

**W**e Catholics believe in a God who speaks. Our God is not a silent,

distant God but a God who wants us to know who he is and who we are and what life is all about. We believe in a God who freely chooses to reveal his mysterious plan to create us, love us, and take us to himself. We believe in the God who spoke to Abraham, who spoke to the patriarchs and prophets, and who spoke his definitive word in Jesus Christ.

And just what did God say? God didn't waste a lot of time talking about incidentals: "The earth is round." Or, "Today is Wednesday." God got right to the point and said, "I love you!" And we hear God's most emphatic "I love you" in the birth, life, preaching, healing, passion, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

This kind of revelation demands more than a yes of agreement to a proposed fact: "Yes, the earth *is* round." "Yes, today *is* Wednesday." The word of love that God speaks in the Bible demands more of us than "yes, that's true."

It calls for a total yes—a yes of commitment—the kind of yes that couples exchange in their wedding vows. "Margaret, do you take Joseph to be your husband?" "Yes, I do." Saying "yes, I do" to the proposal of love that God offers us in Jesus Christ is what being Catholic is all about.

That is why the Bible is essential to

Catholicism. How can we say yes to Jesus, how can we be a disciple of Jesus unless we know Jesus? And to know Jesus we must know the Scriptures, for as St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." The Scriptures are not a list of propositions to be believed. They are an encounter with a person to be loved.

## From Generation to Generation

God has not appeared to me as he did to Elijah. I was not there by the Sea of Galilee with Peter and Andrew, James and John, when Jesus walked by and said, "Follow me." I wasn't knocked to the ground in a blaze of light like St. Paul. I received the faith quietly, gradually. My parents (and teachers, neighbors, and friends) handed on the tradition they had received from their parents, spouses, teachers, and friends. And the members of that former generation handed on what they had received from the generation before them, all the way back to the apostles. Even St. Paul says that he handed on what he had received.

Those who knew Jesus and witnessed his death and resurrection were commissioned to preach and make disciples. Some disciples handed on the message orally and some, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote down their faith experience. Catholics treasure God's self revelation in both its written and oral forms. Catholics cherish Scripture and Tradition. Both reveal the same divine

mystery. Both bring us into contact with the living God. And the word of the living God is a living word. When the Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, we believe that Christ is present. It is Christ himself who speaks to us.

## Ongoing Conversation

I keep a file of my Sunday homilies in the hope that, three years from now when the same readings are used, I will be able to use the same homily over again. But it never works out that way. Each time the passages are proclaimed, God says something new. When I hear Jesus tell Peter and Andrew, "Come after me," the words imply something different—something more—for me now than they did when I was fifteen, or when I was twenty-five, or even when I was fifty.

God speaks to the Scriptures and in the Tradition handed down to us from the apostles. And if we respond to God's word with lives filled with God's Spirit and lived in imitation of Jesus, the definitive Word of the Father, we can be confident that the message will continue to be passed on—generation after generation—until all the ends of the earth hear God's great "I love you." †

## PRAYER

Lord, you taught your disciples how to pray. Help me to cultivate the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Amen.

*From Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 14–19

Mon. St. Maximilian Kolbe:  
Dt 10:12–22 / Mt 17:22–27


Tue. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary:  
Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab /  
1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56

Wed. Weekday:  
Dt 34:1–12 / Mt 18:15–20

Thu. Weekday:  
Jos 3:7–10a, 11, 13–17 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Fri. Weekday:  
Jos 24:1–13 / Mt 19:3–12

Sat. Weekday:  
Jos 24:14–29 / Mt 19:13–15

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