

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (8/9-10/2008)

*1 Kings 9/9-13, Psalm 85, Romans 9/1-5, Matthew 14/22-33*

For sheer drama, it would be hard to top this week's Scripture readings.

The first reading from *1 Kings* tells how Elijah the prophet came into contact with the Lord God but in a totally unexpected way.

Elijah had made a serious enemy of Jezebel, the queen, and she was out to get him.

Seeking divine guidance, the prophet had fled in fear to Mt. Sinai the same mountain on which Moses had encountered God.

There, crouched in a cave on the mountainside, Elijah waited for God's appearance.

He expected that it would be an appearance to remember, and it surely was.

The weather turned nasty and the winds blew, the earth quaked and fire brushed across the mountain.  
(Sounds a bit like California.)

The opportunities for a grand entrance were all around, but no God showed up.

And then "...*there was a tiny whispering sound*" - and God appeared.

How like God to surprise us and show up in a way we least anticipate!

In the Gospel, Jesus also shows up without warning at a moment of great peril for the Twelve.

Sailing across the Sea of Galilee, the apostles run into a storm which threatens to swamp them.

Jesus, whom they had left on shore, suddenly comes walking across the waves, a fact that doesn't exactly calm the lads in the boat.

The quick-thinking Peter, however, asks to walk on the sea like his master, so Jesus calmly invites him to come on in and try it: "*Come!*" he said."

Out steps Peter, initially very confident in Jesus, but the storm is too much for his fragile faith.

As soon as he realizes what he's actually doing, down he goes beneath the waves.

Jesus grabs him and lifts him up, but not without a scolding: "*How little faith you have!...why did you falter?*"

They all climbed into the boat and the wind died down.

There are some scriptural commentators who see this event as central to all the Gospels.

The believers in Jesus – the first Church – are in trouble in the first century.

The trouble is brought on by growing opposition from religious and civil authorities, and by the temptation to lose the initial enthusiasm and commitment of conversion to Jesus.

While the disciples of Jesus were courageous enough, as was Elijah in the first reading, they were also frightened by the force of the opposition.

Simply put, many were losing their initial zeal and some were slipping away from the Lord and back into old habits and non-disciple-like life styles.

Jesus' appearance on the turbulent sea calms the wind and is meant to reassure the disciples of his ongoing presence in their lives.

If Jesus, they reason, has such power even over the forces of nature, and if Jesus is their shepherd and protector, then they really shouldn't worry.

They should trust all that they know of Jesus; they should not be of such little faith.

For the first disciples, as for us, those are easy words to mouth, but they are not always easy to put into action.

But trust we must!