

**OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH**  
**HOMILY FOR THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**7<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2011**

In our opening prayer we said that we are confident to call God “Father”.

Is this a statement or a petition? How confident are we that when we pray we actually speak with God as a child speaks to its Father?

Today’s readings are intended to make us more confident in our prayer, more confident in our faith. Each reading gives us a different way by which God gives us confidence.

In the first reading we find the prophet Elijah on the mountain.

We met Elijah in yesterday’s Feast of the Transfiguration. He was on the mountain then, not any mountain, but the mountain, the place where God speaks to his people. We know from yesterday’s feast that Elijah was such a great prophet that God chose him to represent all the prophets at the Transfiguration of Jesus, yet in this reading Elijah is not feeling great.

The situation was that he had upset the king and queen and they wanted him dead, so he had retreated, with no friends, to the mountain, where felt like giving up.

He said to God: “I have had enough. Take my life.”

He was suicidal, but he was not any mountain, he was on “the mountain” and God responded to Elijah’s desperate cry for help by giving Elijah an unforgettable experience of his real presence in the form of a gentle breeze, a symbol of peace.

This is one way in which God strengthens faith. He gives some people an intense and unexpected experience of his presence, an experience of perfect peace.

Many do not have such an experience, but we can take confidence from those who do.

God is close to those who pray to him. As Catholics we are lucky because we have the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The sanctuary is our mountain where we can speak with the Lord.

That is why the Sacrament is exposed for prayer on Fridays. When we pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, exposed or not, we can be confident that God in Jesus is as close to us as he was to Elijah on the mountain.

The Gospel gives us another way by which God gives us confidence through miracle. In our Gospel today we have a nature miracle, Jesus walking on the water. This was clearly intended to encourage the disciples rowing across the lake against the wind and getting nowhere, but it’s also intended to give us confidence, too.

St. John called miracles signs, signs of the love and strength of God. They have a symbolic meaning that goes beyond the literal facts.

Deep water is a symbol of the unknown and unpredictable, the uncertainties and anxieties in life, situations where we are “out of our depth”.

Blessed Pope John Paul called faith a “launching into the deep.”

On the water of our anxiety we feel alone and abandoned, but Jesus is close to us. He walks over our anxiety. He does not sink into it. He is in control. We should have the confidence to focus on him, not on the “water”.

When we pray Jesus will invite us to come to him over the “water”; to leave our safe but place in the boat and move across the uncertainty towards him.

Peter sank because he had no faith. He looked at the water and not at the Lord. We sink back into anxiety and despair when we lose faith.

Then Jesus has to take us back to the boat, back to our old security, but he stays with us and when we are ready he will lead us safely forward into the unknown again.

Let’s take confidence from St. Matthew’s account of this miracle.

Jesus is with us, he is greater than all our difficulties. If he invites us in prayer to move he will hold us and guide us to the peace that Elijah experienced. If we lose faith we will sink, but if we call “Lord! Save me!” he will do just that as he did for Peter.

So our readings give us three good reasons for having the confidence to call God “Father.”

**Rev Geoff Carey**