

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Is That YOU, Lord?

Then the Lord said: [Elijah,] go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord; the Lord will pass by. There was a strong and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord – but the Lord was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake – but the Lord was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, fire – but the Lord was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. [1 Kings 19:11-13]

Two weeks ago, we discussed the presence of God in our natural world. Although the above quote seems to continue that theme, I'd like to use this quote to explore another way that God speaks to us. If someone asked you if you could hear God speak to you, you might expect a grand sign or some clear, loud voice. However, the first characteristic we notice from Elijah's experience is that God most often speaks to us through a "light silent sound." What this means for us in practice is that we need to quiet ourselves down in order to hear the voice of God. It means that we need to separate ourselves from the noises of the world around us. We need to find a place where we can be alone with our God. Jesus tells us, "When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret." [Matt 6:6]

Also, we find in the above quote that sometimes we must make a real effort to be alone with our God. We needn't climb a mountain, like Elijah, but we need to make the effort of dedicating some real time to our relationship with God. Can you find some quiet time during your day? What if you were the first one out of bed in the morning? Do you have time during your commute to or from work (or both)? Can you shut off your phone and radio for that time? Imagine how much more productive you would be at work or how much more you would have to give to your family if you spent a few minutes in peace. I encouraged this practice of finding/making time to pray several weeks ago, and I

hope that you have been able to do so.

OK, so how does God speak to us? He speaks to us in the silence of our hearts. He speaks to us by the thoughts and feelings of inspiration that we might receive during these moments of quiet. When you quiet down your heart and mind, what thoughts come to you? What feelings do you have during these moments? Many people will say that the most pervasive thought they have at this time is...the grocery list, or some other "thing to do". What do we do about these nagging reminders? Here are two methods to help:

Keep a scratch pad or electronic notepad nearby where you can write down a simple note that will jog your memory later, **after** your prayer. AND/OR

Bring these reminders into your prayer. God wants to be a part of your entire life. You might say, "God, I know that I need to pay bills later, but I really want to spend this time with you. Please ease my conscience and let me focus on you now, so I can focus on the bills later."

Sometimes, though, the matters that interrupt our prayer are more important. These are the kinds of things we definitely want to bring into our prayer. For example, "God, I don't know what to do for my daughter. She is having such a hard time with her husband. Please bring peace and reconciliation into their relationship." Pray for what you believe God would want in that matter and recognize how God responds. Does He bring you hope, or peace, or perhaps an idea of how you can help? Whatever language we speak, God hears us, listens and responds. Perhaps sometimes we can speak His language – silence. That's when we'll really hear Him.

Next week, we'll focus on a specific way to hear God speaking through the circumstances of our daily lives.

