



*Homily – 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)<sup>i</sup>  
w. Blessing of World Youth Day Pilgrims*

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels  
Los Angeles, California  
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and especially you, dear young people who are about to make your pilgrimage to Madrid and the celebration of World Youth Day!

I am especially happy that you are here with us to receive a special blessing for your pilgrimage. It is a beautiful gathering of the young people of the world with our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. I'm sure that you are very excited about going to Madrid and that you are already practicing your Spanish.

The theme of this year's World Youth Day comes from St. Paul: "Planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith."<sup>ii</sup> Or in Spanish: "*Arraigados y edificados en Cristo, firmes en la Fe.*"

And that is my prayer for you today. I pray that you will discover in your pilgrimage a new experience of the love that Jesus Christ has for each one of you, for each one of us, personally.

I pray that your faith will be strengthened and that this journey will inspire you with new dedication for the mission that Jesus Christ has given to each one of us — to build up his Catholic Church in holiness and to establish the values of his Kingdom in our society and in our culture.

That's our mission, my brothers and sisters!

These readings in today's Mass challenge us all to grow in our relationship of faith and trust in Jesus Christ!

Each of us in our discipleship is like the prophet Elijah in the first reading and like the apostles in the passage of the Gospel this morning.

By our baptism, we are sent out as the apostles are sent out — to journey across the sea of this life in the ship of his Catholic Church. We are called to worship Jesus Christ and to bear witness in our lives and in our society that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God.

As Elijah does, and as the apostles do, each of us faces trials and storms in our faith journey. But the God who calls us to come to him never leaves us alone in our struggles.

This is the lesson that Elijah learns and that the apostles learn. And this is the lesson we are called to reflect on this morning.

Our Lord is always passing by. He is always seeking our friendship. He wants to walk with us.

But, my brothers and sisters, sometimes we have a hard time finding him or recognizing him.

We get paralyzed by our fears, as the apostles do in the Gospel. The apostles are so scared that they think Jesus is a ghost! And that can happen to us, too. We can become so anxious about our future or worrying about the things in our lives, that we can think that God is not there for us.

Or we can be like the prophet Elijah in today's reading. We can lose sight of God in all the "noise" and confusion in our world. And there is a lot of noise out there. Just think of what happened this past week with the economy. If we think about the violence and the sadness of the world — those soldiers and people from Afghanistan who died this week. It is very sad and we pray for them especially today. There is a lot of noise and confusion in our world.

Elijah gets caught in a wind that is so strong that it rips through the mountains and shatters the rocks into pieces! Then there is an earthquake. And then there is a fire!

God wants Elijah — and all of us — to know that yes, he is the Lord of the universe. He can make mountains crumble and he has power over all the forces of nature. But he doesn't want to relate to us in that way.

So God does not reveal himself to Elijah in the strong wind. Or the earthquake. Or the fire.

God comes to speak to Elijah like a friend. God comes to Elijah as a "*still, small voice.*" And he comes to each one of us in the same way.

This is the beautiful reality of our Christian lives! Our God comes to us personally, in a gentle loving way. A whispering sound.

This reading today reminds us that it is in quiet stillness that we find God in our lives.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "God is the friend of silence."<sup>iii</sup>

My brothers and sisters, we must make room for silence in our lives! Let's make sure that there is a time every day when we set ourselves apart from the restlessness of our activities. Let's make sure that we have a place in the silence of our hearts where Jesus Christ can speak to us — and where we can listen and speak back to him.

This will really help us in your friendship with God. Silence will give us the disposition to listen and talk to him in an ongoing conversation of faith that will take us through life trusting in God's love.

And when temptations and trials come, we will have the consolation of God's presence and closeness in our lives. God is always there!

The Gospel today assures us of this same reality — that God is always there. That he is ready to give us his hand to help us.

St. Peter in today's Gospel is an example for each one of us.

If St. Peter really had complete faith, he could have walked on the water. And this is true for all of us, too! Everything is possible to those who believe in him!<sup>iv</sup>

If we give ourselves to God and trust him completely, God will give us the grace and the strength to do what we could never do in our human weakness. He will give us the courage to follow him.

St. Peter was fine — he was walking on the water, to his own surprise — as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus and kept moving toward him. But at some point he looked away, he started thinking about his human limitations and the storms around him, he began to sink.

But when that happened, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

My brothers and sisters, what a beautiful lesson for each one of us. Jesus Christ will always hear us when cry out to him. Even when our faith is weak in difficult times, the hand of Christ will be there to catch us.

So let us try this week to be more trusting in our Lord's presence and in his love for us.

Let's make some time this week to enter into a dialogue with Jesus Christ. To talk to him in the silence of our hearts in prayer. Let's get to know him better by reading the Gospels and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

I understand that in your backpacks when you get to Madrid, you are going to have a new catechism, called *YouCat!* It's a beautiful edition of the catechism that is adapted to a more youthful way of looking at the truths of our Catholic faith. I know because I was involved in promoting that.

Let's make time this week, especially, to find those few minutes of silence. Let's try to relate to Jesus more in the Eucharist and in the sacraments.

Jesus Christ who is present in the Bread and the Wine. Jesus Christ who is present in the confessional when the priest gives us the absolution, forgiveness from God.

Jesus Christ who is present in our families and in the people that we meet — especially the poor and the sick and all of our brothers and sisters who are in need of our help.

So this liturgy today is a beautiful lesson for us — in the need for silence and in the certainty that God is with us always.

And to you, my young friends who are going to Madrid, keep in mind: You are made for greater things!

God in his great love has made each one of you for a special reason! Seek his will for your lives during this special pilgrimage of grace that you are about make. May you find the joy and love that our Lord intends for each one of you!

And let all go to the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of the Angels.

Let us ask her to obtain for us the grace we need to trust Jesus more completely. So that we can go through the difficult times of our lives, the storms that are in our lives, the storms that are in our society and in our culture. To be able to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and to receive the grace of going to eternal life.

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<sup>i</sup> Readings: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a; Ps. 95:9–14; Rom. 9:1–5; Matt. 14:22–33.

<sup>ii</sup> Col. 2:7.

<sup>iii</sup> Seeking the Heart of God: *Reflections on Prayer* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 40–42.

<sup>iv</sup> Matt. 17:20; Mark 9:23.