

Quiet Inside to Hear the Whisper Tenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, June 13, 2014
8:15 AM **1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-16;** Mt 5:27-32 St. Anthony of Padua, priest, doctor (The Bible wants to make a distinction, a clear distinction, between the Creator and the creation.)

“After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.”

Today’s story from the First Book of Kings is very revealing **for those who know how to read, not literally but between the lines**, as in the gospel also, not literally since literally your right hand cannot cause you to sin. Your right hand doesn’t make any choices, nor does your eye. So these are **metaphorical ways of speaking**.

In the case of **Elijah he is at the mountain of God**. Now the mountain of God, **Horeb**—it’s called Horeb here; elsewhere it’s called Sinai; it’s the same mountain, different names—this is where Moses originally encountered the presence of God in the so-called “burning bush.” This is holy ground **based on the idea that God resided in the sky**, that is, in a place over everything in the expanse that went beyond the eye; **but God would come down to the mount**, and that made mountains sacred. This was a general belief among many of the people of the Middle East, the high places in Israel, places of worship.

So here is Mount Horeb; this is the mountain of God. There he experiences some **strong phenomena**, strong winds for example, crushing rocks, earthquakes, fire. Now these are the phenomena that insurance companies often call “acts of God,” meaning they come out of the blue; they are unpredictable. In a sense they can’t be prevented because they are so unpredictable. But that way of thinking about acts of God is really not right because God was not in the crushing of the rocks, and God was not in the wind or the earthquake or the fire. So they are really not acts of God in the sense that the Bible wants us to think of God. **They are acts of nature**.

The Bible wants to make a distinction, a clear distinction, between the Creator and the creation. The belief is that **rational creatures can only find their fulfillment in the Creator, not in the creation**. This is a distinction that is absolutely essential. Some accuse the Bible of dualism. Well, there is a kind of distinction, yes, if that’s what you mean; there’s a distinction between the Creator and the creation—yes, there is—between what must be and

what can be. They are not the same; they cannot be the same. They cannot be collapsed into each other. They are unified by the will of the Creator, yes, and the **creation totally depends upon the Creator at all times, both for its existence and for its subsistence**—that’s true. But **in no way does the Creator depend upon the creation.** In no way does what must be depend upon what can be. And these are very **deep truths that our Church has taught and are important for understanding reality.**

So here **Elijah is being taught about reality.** God is not in the wind. God is not in the fire. God is not in the earthquake, not the true God, the Lord, the Creator. No, that’s all part of the creation. It is unpredictable. It is overwhelming. It can be very destructive, but it isn’t an act of God. The Lord is not in it. But **the Lord is there: “After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.”**

Now think about this sound, whispering sound. **In order to hear a whispering sound, we have to be very quiet inside.** If you are very quiet, you can hear the water at the font, the gurgle. Here there is a tiny whispering sound. “And when he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak.” Why? Because he knew that the Lord was in the tiny whispering sound. “And he went and stood at the entrance to the cave, and a voice said to him.” So when we become very quiet and we become very still inside and we let go of all our preoccupations and we let the parade of the world stop for a moment and we let the circus of the world pause, we can hear the voice.