

- The Gospel today says that “During the fourth watch of the night” Jesus came towards the apostles.
  - Just know that night was divided into four watches, so this would have been between around 3-6 in the morning.
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- Now one of the basic themes of our readings today is prayer.
  - Even though He is God, Jesus prays for two reasons:
  - First, that He might show Himself to be from God, as when He says in vocal prayer to the Father: “*Because of the people who stand about I have said [this], that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*” (John 11:42)
  - And secondly, Jesus prays to give us an example of prayer to follow. He shows us prayer’s importance.
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- Jesus went up the mountain alone to pray—separating Himself from worldly distraction for quality time alone with the Father.
  - The prophet Elijah in his mountain cave did not hear God in the great noise of heavy wind, crashing rocks, or earthquake or fire... but rather in the quiet and tiny whispering sound.
  - This is how God tends to speak to us—not in the thunder and smoke of Mt. Sinai, but rather in the silence and the contemplation of our hearts.
  - And this is one of the reasons Jesus tells us: “...*when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret...*” (Matthew 6:6 RSV)...because we have to block out the noise of the world to hear that whispering of God.
  - The greatest of the prophets—Elijah—went by himself to pray. John the Baptist lived a life of prayer in the desert before his mission. Jesus went by Himself to pray. The desert has always been a place to seek God, because it strips us of distractions and unessentials.
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- Does this mean that we need not come together for Mass on Sunday? By no means.
- Both private AND communal prayer and thanksgiving are necessary, and are desired by God.
- He instituted weekly communal prayer in the Sabbath observance in the Old Testament—the entire early Israelite nation ceasing work not only to rest, but to focus upon thanksgiving and worship and teaching their children.
- This was so important that to NOT observe the Sabbath was a capital offense...no doubt to instill a sense of awe and reverence.
- In our day, the Church still requires that weekly attendance of Sunday Mass (or the Saturday evening vigil) as a serious obligation...observance of both the weekly worship of God, and coming together in obedience to Jesus command at the Last Supper with the Eucharist: “*Do this in memory of me.*”
- And we do well to remember two things:
  - The Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, so thus it is really the Holy Spirit who commands this; and...
  - Jesus told the apostles: “*What you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven...*” ...so any obligation of the Church—to attend Mass, for instance—becomes not simply an earthly requirement, but a Heavenly decree.
- And yet...if we really understood the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation, the love of God for us...the grace of the Holy Eucharist...we would be queuing up on the doorstep of the church each Sunday in anticipation of the great undeserved privilege afforded us.

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- Sometimes people are afraid...mindful of their past failures, their past sins.
  - But what does Jesus say today? “*Take courage, it IS I; do not be afraid.*” He is the source of forgiveness...the source of grace.

- The Heavenly Father is always looking eagerly down the road... waiting for us to come home.
  - But we mustn't be like the bad son in one of Jesus' parables who said "Yes", but did not do as the father had asked.
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- And, of course, one of the main themes of our Gospel today is to trust in Christ and in God's love for us in the midst of difficulty.
- Like Peter in the Gospel today, we think too much of our own human limitations. We take our eyes off of Christ.
- Like Peter, that is when we begin to sink...knowing that our own strength and ability fall far short of being able to what may seem to us impossible.
- But Peter cries out, praying: "*Lord, save me!*"...and the Gospel says that Jesus immediately stretched out his hand, and catches him.
- "*O ye of little faith, why did you doubt.*"
- Jesus uses this event to assure us that despite winds and storms against us, He is always there. We need only have faith, accept the crosses He gives us in trust, and He will save us. He will calm the waters for us.
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- Likewise... when we are distressed, the best thing is to put the cross in the center of our lives, follow the way of virtue, trust in Him...and Christ will calm the water.
- Not that we should sit on our hands and do nothing. Always we strive to resolve situations to the good.
- But excessive worry is futile, and is lack of trust.
- Always remember Moses' words to the Israelites at the Red Sea: "*The LORD will fight for you; you have only to be still.*" (Exodus 14:14)...and Psalm 46: "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" (Psalm 46:10)

Reading I

[1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a](#)

At the mountain of God, Horeb,  
Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter.  
Then the LORD said to him,  
“Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD;  
the LORD will be passing by.”  
A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains  
and crushing rocks before the LORD—  
but the LORD was not in the wind.  
After the wind there was an earthquake—  
but the LORD was not in the earthquake.  
After the earthquake there was fire—  
but the LORD was not in the fire.  
After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.  
When he heard this,  
Elijah hid his face in his cloak  
and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14](#)

**R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

I will hear what God proclaims;  
the LORD — for he proclaims peace.

Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,  
glory dwelling in our land.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

Kindness and truth shall meet;  
justice and peace shall kiss.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

The LORD himself will give his benefits;  
our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him,  
and prepare the way of his steps.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

Reading II

[Rom 9:1-5](#)

Brothers and sisters:

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie;  
my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness  
that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart.  
For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ  
for the sake of my own people,  
my kindred according to the flesh.  
They are Israelites;  
theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants,  
the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises;  
theirs the patriarchs, and from them,  
according to the flesh, is the Christ,  
who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. ñ

Gospel

[Mt 14:22-33](#)

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat  
and precede him to the other side,  
while he dismissed the crowds.  
After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.  
When it was evening he was there alone.  
Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore,  
was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.  
During the fourth watch of the night,  
he came toward them walking on the sea.  
When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.  
“It is a ghost,” they said, and they cried out in fear.  
At once Jesus spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”  
Peter said to him in reply,  
“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”  
He said, “Come.”  
Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.  
But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened;  
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”  
Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter,  
and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”  
After they got into the boat, the wind died down.  
Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying,  
“Truly, you are the Son of God.”