Homily for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 9th August 2020

We have in the Scriptures today two very beautiful and encouraging passages **about the Lord's presence with us in our lives,**

*But also a reminder that **the way** that God is present*
may be very different from what we first expected.

The disciples were in the boat, a storm all around them.
The boat is symbolic thing:

We're out on a deep lake; all that's between us and drowning
is *that boat.*
The storm makes it all the worse

Very much like what our life can be at times; very much so in this particular year.

There seem to be deep waters in which we find ourselves

And we fear that we'll drown, be overwhelmed, by what's happening to us and around us:

Life can be very stormy.

And the Gospel says that there on the lake,

s**tanding above those deeps, in the midst of that storm,**

w*as the Lord, saying: "Courage, it is I."*

Well, that may sounds alright, but perhaps at times

in our storms, the deep waters in which we find ourselves,

i**t might not seem so clear that the Lord is there.**

And so we need, I think, to turn back to the first reading

from the Book of Kings:

Elijah is on the mountain of God, spending the night in a cave.

Elijah in fact at this time was on the run, in fear for his life:

He was certainly experiencing the storm; things were far from well.

And Elijah comes and stands outside the cave

a*nd there comes a mighty wind which tears the mountain apart,*

But the Lord was not in the wind:

w*here people would have expected God to be.*

And then there was an earthquake – **and God wasn't in that;**

And a fire **– and God wasn't in that.**

These were the great traditional images of appearances of God

And God wasn't in them.

And we're told that then there came the sound of a gentle breeze

'and when Elijah heard this he covered his face with his cloak

and stood at the entrance of the cave.'

God was present in the unexpected*:* *in the power-less breeze.*

And so perhaps we too need to look for the not so obvious ways that God is there in our storms.

We might be looking for God to come to remove the problem, to fix it up for us,

a*nd when that doesn't happen we feel*

"Well, where was God in all of that?"

Perhaps the answer is to say that God **is not** necessarily going to remove the problem….

b*ut will be with us in subtle ways, like the gentle breeze, **within** the struggle*.

If we're prepared to be open-minded enough then perhaps we can recognise

this subtle presence of God:

n**ot in the wind, earthquake and fire, but in the gentle breeze.**

God may not remove the struggles, disasters, pains,

b*ut rather <u>be with us</u> in ways that enable us*

t**o survive,** <u>and perhaps even **grow** through the experience</u>**.**

- Could God be there in the people who offer their support and encouragement?

They can't take away the situation we're in,

But they can remind us of the power of love, <u>of human goodness when things seem all bad</u>.

- Could God be present in the fact that somehow **we do** find the strength to live through the storm

<u>when we didn't believe it would be possible that we would have the strength?</u>

- Could it be that in the end we find ourselves a changed person,

s**omeone who has grown,**

<u>someone that we wouldn't have been without the storm.</u>

Can we see that some good was to be found hidden amongst the bad?

If we set ourselves with only one interpretation of how God can work in our lives:

- to remove all pain and struggle –

then we will almost certainly be disappointed.

*But if we can be open to the **hidden** presence of God,*

the God who comes not in earthquake, wind or fire, but I the gentle breeze,

then we may recognise that, as in Jesus on the lake,

God IS there in our storms, and deep waters.

And if we're open to that then

- **there's hidden grace to be found in the painful experiences of life,**

- **and there's the potential for even the worst situations to bring about something good and noble in us.**

Fr Colin