

August 13, 2017 first draft

A woman was walking down the street, and all of a sudden, she heard a voice, "STOP!" So, she stopped and this big piece of metal fell right in front of her. Another footstep and she would have been crushed. She looked around and didn't see any person belonging to the voice. She shrugged her shoulders and went on. Several days later, she was getting ready to step off a curb to cross the street, and she hears, "STOP!" She looks around; a car comes within inches of her going past. Another step, hood ornament. She looks around again, where is this voice coming from? All of a sudden, she hears, "Do you know who I am?" She says, "No, I don't." The voice says, "I am your guardian angel and I'm sent here to protect you from harm. " Instead of becoming thankful, she was indignant! "Now where you on the day I got married?"

Today we look at the first reading from the book of Kings. It's about Elijah. Elijah was a tremendous prophet. It is interesting because we know who he is and what he's about, by his name. Elijah in Hebrew is, El ee ah who. El ee ah who, means, Yahweh is God. Elijah is a Man of God. Everything about him points to God. Everything he says, goes to God, wants to draw attention to God. He lives in a very bad time. Secularism is risen in Israel, and people have gotten away from the true God. The king, Ahaz has married a pagan princess named Jezebel. Jezebel wants her god's temples all over Israel. Her god is Baal. Baal is the god of lightning and thunder and fertility and to worship him, you sacrifice your oldest child in a ball of flame. You immolate them. This is going on with the king's permission because he refuses to stand up for the true religion. And not only that, he participates in these worship ceremonies. Elijah comes to him and tries to get him to straighten up. To tell his wife, "No, we've got to worship the other way, to get the people back on track, to worshipping the true God. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." The king is wishy-washy. So finally, Elijah says, "Listen, let's just do this, let's have a contest. You take the priests of Baal and I'll go up on the same mountain with them; we'll build two altars. They can offer sacrifice, I will offer sacrifice and we'll see, which God sends the flames down from heaven to take the sacrifice." So they build the altars and the priests of Baal go first. They dance around the altar and they make all kinds of noise, and they call all these different names of Baal. Elijah just leans back on the altar like this, says, "Maybe you need to call louder, maybe he's asleep." So they go and they wail and they cry all the louder and they start to cut themselves to see if that will do anything. Elijah's like this (leaning back on the altar). Maybe you need to do something else, maybe he's in the bathroom. So later, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Elijah says, "Enough, your god has not appeared." He goes over and cuts up the bull, puts it on the altar; he has a trench dug around the altar, he has the trench filled with water. Then he says, "OK God, show them your stuff." (I'm paraphrasing.) All of a sudden fire comes out of the sky and it consumes not only the meat, but the altar and all the water as well. "We won the contest," Elijah says. He then says, "Bring me those false priests." There is 450 of them. He slits the throat of every one of them. Because it's a death penalty to be idolatrous at that time. Well Queen Jezebel is furious, she's not happy, all her priests are dead. She calls up the army and says, "Sic em." Elijah becomes afraid; he runs out to the desert, he goes so far and then he sits down under a tree and has a pity-fit. "Oh God, please kill me now, my life should be over, it's not worth it." So, God sends an angel and the angel brings him something to eat and something to drink. He eats it and drinks it. The angel says, "You have to have a second helping." So, he eats the second helping. "No, you need a third helping." So, he eats the third helping and drinks the third helping. Then he gets up and he walks forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb which you and I know as Mount Sinai, where Moses got the Ten

Commandments. That is where we pick up our story in the first reading. Elijah's in a cave waiting for God's next move. But he knows who God is because he is a Man of God.

If you worship money, you are a financier. If you worship sex, you are a playboy or playgirl. If you worship being in the company more than your family, you're a company person. If you worship pleasure more than anything else, you're a good-time Charley, etc. We are known by what we worship and love the most. Elijah knows God because he's a God person. He sits in the cave and he waits. This wind comes through, trashes everything, even crushes boulders. Elijah doesn't move, God's not in them. The earthquake hits, shakes everything up (which is why I'm wondering why he's in the cave) but it shakes everything up; God's not there either. A fire comes raging through the desert; God's not there either. But all of a sudden, we hear a little whisper. Elijah gets up and puts the cloak over his face, because God is passing in front of the cave. God is not found in the natural forces of this world. God is not found in nature. He uses nature, but He is not found in nature. People say, "Oh God's in everything." No, that's pantheism. That's a heresy. God uses nature, God created nature. He does not come in the natural forces because He is supernatural. Supernatural means outside of the natural realm. The word has gotten commonly used because of vampires, werewolves, all those kinds of things. But, it's more than that. It's outside of the natural realm. Those guys are actually in the natural realm. God is found in things we don't normally think of. God is found in things we don't have our eyes open for or our ears open for. God is found in other things. You have these televangelists talking about, "The Gospel of Prosperity." If you look at these verses, if you pray this way, you will become wealthy. God will take care of you. Who becomes wealthy? Them. They want people to send their money. God never promises that. God does not promise wealth and prosperity on this earth. God does not promise wonderful things, power, all that, on this earth. God is above that. God wants us to recognize there is something greater than the things of this world. He wants us to focus in, on the other, that we are not used to, that's not common for us. He doesn't do these natural forces. He does supernatural. That's why the little whispering sound, was different from all the others. That is how Elijah knew. We have to keep our eyes and ears open. We see that the world tries to drag us down. The world is always there; buy this and you'll be happy, own this and you'll be happy, do this and you'll be happy. And that's not true at all. People do that and they say they feel empty still. So, they look for more. We see that this whole thing about the world, natural verses supernatural, plays out in the gospel as well. The boat represents the church. We call it the barque of Peter; barque is an old word for boat. So, the boat is the church. The Apostles are the Bishops, the Pope, the Magisterium, the people that are supposed to lead and guide us. The water is the world, it's dangerous. The darkness; it happened in the fourth watch which is three a.m. It's evil. The wind is an evil force; a natural force, doesn't belong to God. So they are being tossed about in the church by the world. They're afraid. People are always telling me, "Father, I can't do it, I'm afraid. I'm afraid people will laugh at me. I'm afraid people will make fun of me, afraid people won't respect me, if I do that for the parish." Why are you afraid? Jesus came to save you, God loves you, why are you afraid? The apostles for God; they witnessed Jesus all this time and they have forgotten, not to be afraid. So, they are afraid. And all of a sudden, they see this figure walking on the water. How many of us have tried to walk on water? I have, it didn't work. God is not calling me to do that. So, they see this figure, and the only person who can walk on water, that can control water and the weather is God. But that didn't look like God. You can't see the face of God and live. So, they recognized, "ah, that's Jesus." Well it must be a ghost. (They still haven't figured out that Jesus is God). Peter gets up and says, "Lord if it's you, have me come to you." Jesus says, "Come." What does he say? "Have no fear." People are afraid of doing God's will. They are afraid of what God wants them to do in their lives. Have no fear.

Jesus will support us. Peter gets out and he's standing on top of the world, facing evil, and he is able to transcend all that, go above that, because he's got his eye on the face of Jesus. The moment he doesn't look at Jesus, and he looks somewhere else, the world grabs him and pulls him in. All of a sudden, he is an idolater. He is worshipping something else. So, he had to say this wonderful prayer, "Lord Save Me." That's a good prayer for all of us. Lord save me. And stop there. Don't go on, "Lord save me from this idiot or this or that or the other." Stop there. That's a good prayer. And what does Jesus do? He has Peter look him back in the face and then He raises him up. That's what God wants us to do. God wants us not to have fear. Not to buy into the world. There is actually another question we can ask ourselves. Not what do we love, but why do we love it. It boils down to, "What am I afraid of?" I'm worshipping something else besides Jesus, because I'm afraid. Not of spiders, snakes and all that stuff. But I am afraid. Am I afraid of losing my family? Am I afraid of losing the house? Am I afraid of this...what is driving our desire to worship something besides Jesus? To keep our face focused down on the world instead of on Jesus. That is the question we have to ask ourselves. And, if we answer it truthfully, and find the answer, then we've had a tremendous leap in holiness. A tremendous leap in faith. We have no fear, or we shouldn't. All we have to do is like Peter; look at the face of Jesus. And he will raise us up above the cares of this world.

God bless you