

Fr. Emmanuel-Garet Ifeakor
First Kings 19, 9a, 11-13a
Romans 9: 1-5
Matthew 14: 22-33

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH
Louisville KY, USA
August 9, 2026

Theme: **The presence of God.**

(Singing) “When I come into your presence, I’m so happy. When I come into your presence, I’m so glad. For your presence there is anointing; the spirit moves around me in your presence. Anointing breaks the yoke.” The presence of God. My dear people of God, the concept of being present means, implies, or signifies impressive appearance, or manifestation, or being with or being near somebody. When we talk about divine presence or the presence of God, we talk about God’s manifestation and God’s appearance to us. God, in the first reading, manifested Himself to Elijah at Mount Horeb. Now, this is not the first time God is manifesting Himself to people. Keep in mind that on this mountain, in Exodus 3, God appeared and manifested Himself to Moses in the burning bush. Moses was told by God to pull off his sandals because where he was standing is a holy land or a holy ground. That said, holiness is the first character of divine presence. God revealed Himself to him saying: “I Am who I Am.” God revealed Himself to Moses on this mountain. Also, recall the encounter between the prophets of Baal and Elijah happened on this mountain in the book 1 Kings 18 where Elijah conquered the prophets of Baal. In fact, it was after this particular encounter that Elijah was running away from Jezebel, and he came to a cave where he took shelter on the mountain of God, Mount Horeb. And this is our first reading today. God manifestation Himself to Elijah on this mountain, the mountain of God; Mount Horeb. Mount Horeb is so stony, rocky, rough, and rugged. In fact, the sides of this mountain have deep holes. So, when you are climbing this mountain, if you happen to fall either by the right or by your left, you and your God will sort it out there.

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. There appeared an earthquake. But God was not there. Then there appeared a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. This is like what happened in California. We are not living

in California. When you go there, you see the wide fire, or in Canada the smoke that was even coming to the United States, you understand what it means to be in a wide fire. Still, the Lord was not there. At last, 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. This indicates the presence of God. Now listen, it does not mean that God cannot manifest Himself in fire, or through earthquakes, or great wind. But the bottom line for you and for me is to listen, to decode, and to discern the presence of God and when God is talking to us. As a matter of fact, we have just cited Exodus 3 where God manifested Himself and appeared to Moses in the burning bush. So, don't dismiss God's manifestation of Himself in any aspect of His creation. It depends where He wants to manifest Himself at a particular time. At this time, He manifested Himself in a whispering sound. These are the Old Testament accounts of the presence of God.

In the New Testament, God manifested Himself through Christ, Hebrews 1: 1 and Galatians 4:4. The God that manifested Himself in Christ is the God we saw in the gospel walking on the water. Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." You know Peter is always impetuous. And Christ 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 was beginning to sink. However, he remembered again the divine presence, the presence of God, and cried out, "Lord, save me." Christ saved him. Peter began to entertain doubt, even in the presence of God. My dear brothers and sisters, there are times when our faith in the presence of God entertains doubt. We entertain doubt. It could be during the ups and downs of our life, or uncertainties, or when things are not going as we thought or as planned. In those moments, we begin to ask, is God still with us? Like in the second reading where Paul talked about great sorrow and constant anguish in his heart.

My dear people of God, do we need to go back to Mount Horeb to encounter God? Do we need to go and walk on the sea before we know the divine presence or the presence of God? We don't need it again. God has made Himself accessible to us. He has made Himself accessible to us through the Incarnation. Therefore, as our faith teaches us, Christ is present in the minister; Christ is present in the sacraments; Christ is present in the word of God and Christ is also present in the liturgical assembly because He said that where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there, Cf. Mt. 18:20. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we need it in our life. I need it in my life. You need it in your life. We need divine presence in our businesses. We need it in your families. We need it in work and profession. You need it in your job. This is because in the presence of God, anointing breaks

the yoke. When we seek God in prayer and contemplation, we ask God to give us the grace, wisdom and understanding that would enable us always to listen, decode, and discern divine presence in our life. The bottom line, as we said earlier, is listening, decoding, and discerning God's presence in all these areas of our life we have mentioned. When God is with us, who can be against us? (Singing)
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