

Commentary to the 19th Sunday Ordinary Time



Message: The most basic step in finding your place: a time of silence to hear that "tiny whispering voice." I begin a new homily series this Sunday.* I would like to start with humor. Once a man walked out in the middle of my homily.

Naturally I was distressed, but later I talked with his wife. "Father Bloom," she said. "Don't take it personally. Ever since he was a child, my husband has been walking in his sleep!" Well, I hope you will not sleep this Sunday. This new homily series has a vital theme: Finding Your Place. It's about discovering God's plan and achieving peace in your heart.

It will help in overcoming envy - to be grateful for what you have rather than thinking about the things others have. It will help a person realize their full potential. So the question before us is: How do I find my place? How do I find my place in God's world? I added the phrase "in God's world" to make it clear I am talking about more than finding one's place in this world - getting a good job and becoming a good citizen. Those things are important, yet a person can be a success in this world and lose his soul. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him." So we are talking about finding one's place - not so much in this world, but God's world. Jesus says Satan is prince of this world. Illusion and deception fill Satan's world.

This world speaks loudly with the voice of advertising: Purchase this car and all your friends will envy

you. Drink this coffee, shop at this store, wear these clothes - and you will be somebody. Not a loser like the people who use other brands! The voice of this world speaks at high volume, but the voice of God is different. In today's first reading God speaks to Elijah - not in thunder, not in an earthquake, not in fire, but in a "tiny whispering sound."

God speaks to us in silence. If we are going to find our place in God's world, we need silence, a time of prayer each day. I have asked you before and I will ask you again: Can you give God 20 minutes every day, in the morning or in the evening? Take at least 20 minutes to slowly read a Gospel passage - maybe like we heard today.

Imagine yourself in that boat with the disciples. A storm comes and you feel in danger of losing everything, even your life. You cry out, "Lord, save me." By calling out to Jesus, you have taken a big step to finding your place in God's world. There's something else, something very practical. St. Paul mentions it in the second reading. We have to find our place in relation to the Israelites, the Jewish people. As Paul says, "Theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law and the promises, theirs the patriarchs and from them, according to the flesh is the Christ (the Messiah)" God speaks not only in our hearts, but in human history - above all the chosen people, the Jews. "Salvation is from the Jews," says Jesus. (John 4:22)

To find your place in God's world, you and I have to understand our relationship to the Jews, the Israelites. That's why we begin our Liturgy of the Word with a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. Next Sunday we will hear more about the relation between Jew and Gentile, that is, between the Israelites and all the rest of us.

Paul wants to provoke a "jealousy" between the two, a good and holy jealousy that is very different from envy. But that's for next week. For now I want to recognize the most basic step in finding your place: a time of silence to hear that "tiny whispering voice." And the one who hears God speak in his heart will also want to know what God has communicated in the history of his chosen people.

They wrote some of the most beautiful poetry in human history. I close with one inspired verse: "Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation. I will hear what God proclaims; the Lord - for he proclaims peace." Amen

Fr Phil Bloom