

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There are seasons when temptation feels especially persistent. We may be making steady progress in recovery, practicing healthy routines, and growing closer to God, only to find ourselves unexpectedly confronted by old thoughts, familiar triggers, or discouragement. In those moments, it can seem as though the storm is stronger than our desire for freedom. This Sunday's readings remind us that Christ remains present even when our attention begins to drift.

In the first reading, Elijah encounters the Lord while hiding in a cave (1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a). A violent wind, an earthquake, and a fire all pass before him, yet the Lord is not found in any of them. Instead, God speaks through a tiny whispering sound. Elijah recognizes His presence and steps forward.

Recovery from lust addiction teaches us a similar lesson. We often expect God to work through dramatic victories or the complete disappearance of temptation. Sometimes He does. More often, His grace is experienced quietly through daily prayer, honest conversations with a sponsor or trusted friend, regular meetings, the sacraments, and the simple decision to choose integrity one moment at a time. These ordinary acts of faith gradually reshape our hearts, even when we do not immediately recognize the change.

The gospel offers another powerful image of this journey (Matthew 14:22-33). As the disciples struggle against the wind and waves, Jesus comes toward them walking on the water. Peter responds with remarkable courage by stepping out of the boat at Christ's invitation. Yet when his attention shifts from Jesus to the storm around him, fear

takes over and he begins to sink. He immediately cries out, "Lord, save me!" and Jesus reaches out His hand.

This movement is familiar in recovery. We begin the day focused on Christ, but our attention can slowly become consumed by temptation, fantasy, anxiety, or loneliness. Instead of bringing those experiences into the light, we may begin negotiating with them, believing we can manage them on our own. Before long, fear and self-reliance replace trust, and we find ourselves drifting toward old patterns.

Peter's experience reminds us that the turning point is not the presence of the storm but the direction of our attention. Recovery is not measured by never experiencing temptation. It is measured by how quickly we return our attention to Christ when temptation arises. We pause. We pray. We reach out to another person. We redirect our thoughts before they become actions. These practices are not signs of weakness. They are habits of spiritual strength.

Step Eleven supports this daily reorientation through prayer and meditation. Instead of becoming preoccupied with temptation, we seek conscious contact with God. Over time, our desires begin to change. We become less fascinated by what once captivated us and more drawn toward authentic intimacy with God and others. Chastity grows not merely because we resist unhealthy desires, but because our hearts are increasingly filled with something greater.

Every person in recovery experiences moments of weakness. Peter did. The difference is that he turned toward Jesus instead of away from Him. His cry, "Lord,

save me!" was enough. Christ responded immediately, not with rejection, but with compassion and strength.

As we continue in recovery, we are invited to keep our eyes fixed on Christ, even when the waves feel strong. Temptation may still arise, but it no longer has the final word. The One who calls us out of the boat is the same One who reaches out His hand whenever we begin to sink.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What circumstances or emotions are most likely to draw your attention away from Christ and toward temptation?
- Which daily practices help you recognize God's quiet voice before temptation gains momentum?
- How have you experienced Christ meeting you with mercy and strength after honestly crying out, "Lord, save me!"?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

RESP. PS. Psalm 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14

SECOND READING Romans 9:1-5

GOSPEL Matthew 14:22-33