**It’s Great to Listen to the Voice of God**

*Fr Louis Fowóyò̩*

Have you ever found yourself in a desperate situation needing to be consoled? What did you do when you discovered that there is/was no immediate solution?

* In his moment of total desperation, St Francis is said to have cried out to God saying; “Lord, nothing will happen today that You and I cannot handle.”
* A young friend called me once reporting what had just happened between herself and her partner. She was disappointed, broken and in tears on the phone, because she could not believe that would ever happen in their relationship.
* She cried uncontrollably so much so that nothing could pacify her. At a point, I did nothing but just listened to her and allowed her to let the emotions and the feelings run. This lasted for one hour and some minutes. As this went on, you would have thought that the world was collapsing on her. At the end, we both agreed to surrender all to God.
* Life problems pull us down but prayer lifts us up. It is not easy to hear or respond to the voice that lifts us up when we are in desperate need. The voice can get lost in all the noise and activities of our daily lives. A little silence can help us, like Elijah, and make us step out of the boat like Peter.

**1st Reading: 1Kings 19:9a, 11-13a;** is story of the prophet Elijah spending a night alone in the cave waiting for the intervention of God.

* I can imagine that the night would have seemed like eternity to him, but there was nothing he could do because he had reached a point where he had to surrender to God.
* The Lord instructed him: "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by."
* He obeyed. He had no other means. He has lost all power and ideas to help himself. But he found the Lord: “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.”
* Once you start to listen, the still and quiet voice has the power to be heard above the loudest of storms.
* At the presence of the Lord, he worshipped in adoration. He went to meet the Lord in humility and total surrender.

**2nd Reading: Romans 9:1-5;** St Paul expresses his firm conviction in the Lord because he was able to find that reality within the many noises of the world. He knew the true God and he left his old ways to follow it.

* The reading is establishing the historical fact that the Lord made a promise to a race. It will be a joy for St Paul if these people were listening. The hope expressed in the reading is that God has not alienated them but continues to wait for them to retrace their steps.
* St Paul says: “I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”
* The anguish in the heart of St Paul is what many of us as parents, brothers and sisters, friends and acquittances feel when the one we love refuses to listen to good reason.

**Gospel: Mt 14:22-33;** this is when the Lord Jesus tries to teach the real human situation to us about seeking and listening to the voice of God.

* He was not with the disciples; they were on the sea by themselves; the waters became turbulent and frightening; the disciples saw a strange object; someone among them recognized the object as Jesus.
* Some of the disciples of Jesus were fishermen so they knew three things about the sea – these are:
	+ a prosperous commercial fishing activity is along the shore;
	+ the areas surrounding the sea are fertile for fruits and vegetables to grow and
	+ while all these are true, the sea could also be a place of chaos and hell, because of the presence of many spirits (especially the evil spirits) that live in it. That is why the Jews describe it as a monstrous beast.
* We can now understand the fear of Peter when after a little step, he became afraid and was sinking.
* It is this monstrous beast of fear, horror, terror and freight that Jesus confronted as He rescued Peter from sinking.

“Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.”

* Prophet Elijah struggled with evil prophets of Baal, he ran away but God still called him back. Jesus allowed His disciples to struggle before coming to their rescue. He saved Peter from being consumed by the sea.
* It is in the struggle of life that we learn the significance of faith. Jesus always listens to our cry even when we think that all is over. God always wants us to take the step of faith.
* If we look to God for the ability, instead of relying on our strength, we will find the courage to step out of the boat like Peter and walk on the stormy water of life.