

19TH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A – 13TH AUGUST 2023

My life, probably like yours, is littered with good resolutions. I get enthusiasms about things, such as going on a diet, or taking exercise, but once I'm faced with the nitty gritty, I lose interest. The devil truly is in the detail. I get bored; I want results, and I want them now.

Sadly, this goes not just for little vanities, like losing weight. It happens with important things, as well: parish visiting, daily prayer, charitable works. How many times have I resolved to start again, make a fresh start. And here I am back again, where I began.

I can only stand up here and say all this because, I believe, most of us are the same. How many of you have volunteered for something in a fit of enthusiasm, only to give up a few weeks or months later? How many goals have you set, only to lose interest?

We even do it with God. We like the big idea, God. Yes, we believe, we sign up, we bear the name of Christ. The love of God, the holiness of God, the glory of God - big ideas, attractive ideas. But what about at a much smaller scale? God in my daily life? God who asks me to talk to this person whom I dislike. God who wants me to count my change and hand back the extra when I've been undercharged. That God, perhaps, is not quite so attractive.

It's summed up in Peter, in the gospel. He'd seen what Jesus could do: he could change the weather in the middle of the lake. He could walk on water. And he wanted to be in on it. Power, glory, fame - yes, he wanted them so badly, he jumps out of the boat and tries the same trick himself, and promptly sinks.

What Peter wanted was a shortcut, to Jesus, across the water, and also across his faith. He forgot that to be like Christ takes a journey, a lifetime of living faith, struggling, finding God in the detail of our daily lives. But he wanted to by-pass that. He wanted to go straight to the top. He wanted the glamour, without the effort.

Again, we cannot criticize him. Peter stands for each of us who gladly sign up to the concept of Christianity, but get bored with the detail. We want results, not struggle. We want rewards, not pilgrimage. Elijah, in that first reading, assumed he'd find God in the great events of the cosmos; he looked for an overwhelming, dominating, super-scale

God. And he missed him. God was in the quiet whisper, in the ordinary things, in the expected and well-known.

That's how we find God - not moving mountains around, but doing the washing and the shopping, watching TV. In these places, we are presented with choices, decisions, opportunities that go to the heart of our faith; love, honesty, courtesy, forgiveness, generosity. Faith doesn't only compel us to do mighty gestures: save the world, abolish poverty, end wars. It also urges us to do ordinary things well.

A lot less glamorous. But it's the stuff of faith. I'm fond of a saying of St Theresa: you can tell a saint by the way they shut a door. If you want to be like Christ, don't try walking on water. Try doing ordinary things well. Try putting love into making the beds. Try putting generosity into a telephone call. Try putting courtesy into driving the car. Try putting gentleness into that report you're drawing up.

The Lord comes to us in everyday life, to transform us from the inside, to walk with us in our daily struggles. He's a God of small things. And that's where we'll find him. If you want to find God, if you want to know how strong your faith in him is, don't try to walk on water, don't go looking in earthquakes and sound effects; look at your diary for the next week. That's where you'll find him.