

**August 9, 2020 | 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**

[1 KGS 19:9A, 11-13A](#)

[PS 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14](#)

[ROM 9:1-5](#)

[MT 14:22-33](#)

*By Thad Crouch*

The LORD did not appear in the intensity of the wind, earthquake, fire, nor in MSNBC, FOX News, CNN, OAN, nor on polarizing social media posts. The LORD revealed Himself in a tiny whispering voice. A prayer life of inner stillness and silence can both help us hear that voice and also, like St. Paul, join our conscience with the Holy Spirit.

In these tragic polarizing times, many of us are posting both truths and opinions we think are true with such disdain for those who disagree with us, that it seems kindness and truth have yet to meet. Others react to that disdain and we have cycles of reaction after reaction growing in a crescendo such that makes it so difficult to notice the Holy Spirit's gentle whisper.

Angry political and social storms are raging around elections, justice for black lives, accountability for law enforcement, and even virus. Some of us sitting in our political boats with those who share our opinions yelling at those in the "other" boat — as if there are only two — not considering that there may be some truth from the "other" boat and ignoring there are actually many boats.

How can justice and peace kiss if we keep kindness and truth from meeting?

How can we walk with Jesus above the waves of these storms if we are so focused on our fears, anger, and opinions that we are making even more waves which block Jesus from our view and his invitation from our ears?

Around the globe Catholics from areas of violent conflict and Catholic ethicists have been promoting a Just Peace Ethic. They "envision a just peace as a way of political cooperation for the common good, respect for the dignity of all persons and the natural world, preventing violence before it begins, and the transformation of conflict by nonviolent strategies."

Our nation, our world, and some of our cities and communities could really use all those things. So could our media — broadcast, print, and social. Preventing and transforming violence require cooperation. Cooperation is easier if people respect each other and begin to listen to each others' voices and to God's voice.

Our efforts at justice and peace, our efforts at cooperation, and our efforts even with communication can start with inner peace and inwardly respecting the dignity of others to give them their just due in the way we listen to them.

Saints have taught us that it's easier to hear God's whisper if we go off by ourselves like Jesus to pray and quiet ourselves inwardly. It's also easier to truly listen to others if we quiet our own thoughts and respect their dignity enough to generously focus on listening to them.

Deeply listening to words we hear or read requires a focused, undistracted mind. How many family arguments have arisen when our brain was hearing while our mind thinking about something else and not listening?

Deeply listening is not always easy. Once our brains hear or read certain words it quickly associates them with past experience, knowledge and triggers well-worn habitual synaptic pathways to our opinions and default ways of thinking. Sometimes mere past experiences of just a person or a group to which they belong triggers us to start counter-arguments in our minds before they even get a word out. When we do that we are both reactionary and not respecting their dignity because we haven't given them a fair hearing.

When we are reactionary we cannot respond to the present because we are on auto-pilot. In the moments that we are reactionary we cannot be creative, we cannot co-create with God and we cannot cooperate well with others.

Truth and kindness must meet in our minds and hearts before it can meet in the world such that justice and peace can kiss.

If our conscience is to join and stay joined to the Holy Spirit, then we must rigorously examine our conscience to include how well we can be present and listen to others who are made in the image of God and have God-given human dignity no matter what their opinions and politics — and no matter our own!

God proclaims peace, may it not fall on deaf minds! For if we must deeply listen to God and each other if we are to cooperate for the common good, prevent violence, and transform conflicts by co-creating just peace.

*Thad Crouch produces Choose Life Abort War Podcast for Peace, coordinates this Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Linking the Lectionary to Justice and Peace Project, and serves on both the Social Ministry Committee and Respect Life Ministry team at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church in Austin, Texas.*