

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



Catholic Community

Member of the English-Speaking Mission

Mass: Fridays at 6 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Sundays at 10 a.m. in the main Sanctuary

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August 20th, 2017 – Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time **Celebrant: Fr. Wolfgang Felber**

Readings (Missal p 195 et seqq.): Isa 56:1, 6-7 • Ps 67:2-3, 5-6; 8 • Rom 11:13-15, 29-32 • Mt 15:21-28

Real faith is involved with the issues of the world

Today's scriptures are centered on the experience of God and the invitation to believe. When we read the newspapers, we see worldwide crisis: the tension between the US and North Korea, between two men: president Trump and North Korean leader King Jong Un. We see the catastrophes in the Mediterranean - people dying of thirst or drowning in the Mediterranean. Fires in inhabited areas caused by humans, or caused by lack of rain. We suffer from climate change, negated by many factors. The situation in Venezuela, in Kenya – tensions, killings... The racist attack in Charlottesville, Virginia. Could these events also be experiences of God, experiences of faith? Faith is not about finding the right formula for prayer, finding the right words and the liturgically correct celebration, but it is about *living* our faith. Our faith, our experience of God always has a social dimension.

Faith is about our world. Our world with its social and economic situation challenges our faith. We are confronted with the existence of war and violence and terror. We witness the prevalence of injustice and poverty and conflict and struggle. We might experience a certain apathy about all these things. The sheer volume of issues and needs can feel like the storm in the Gospel (Mt 14,22-33), can be compared to the winds, the earthquake and the fire in the first reading (Kings 19,11-13).

And as we come to know these Bible readings, we must put what happens in the world in relation to our faith. Often our goodness is demanded. This can rightly make us want to get away from it all, like Jesus who dismisses the crowd and goes off to pray. However, somehow in the midst of all the storms, God can be experienced. In the midst of all the storms, we can even grow in our faith, and we can move into action to do something. We might even "*walk on water*" for a little while. Getting away from it all can be a good thing. The wish to get away from it all is certainly legitimate – at certain times.

Jesus in his prayer on the mountain reminds us of the need we have to get away, the need we have to connect with God, and the need to take care of our spirit as we struggle in the world that surrounds us ... the world that demands action.

If our reflection and prayer is rooted in **real** experience, then it is automatically critical. We all need time and resources to take care of ourselves; we need time and resources to nurture our life and our solidarity with God and others.

Elijah (Kings 19) in his prayer on the mountain reminds us that our faith is not to be based on religious excitement or fireworks. We don't need the spectacular to find God. Getting fixated on special religious phenomena can keep us from finding God.

Real faith is a much different thing. Real faith is involved with the issues of the world. It is something more than a "spiritual high." It involves humble service and solidarity with those in need. **Real** faith sometimes even involves feeling "great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart." This is how Paul describes it in his letter to the Romans in today's second reading (Rom 9,1-5). Such solidarity can be empowering for us and for all those we are with. Then, we might experience anew, the God in the "tiny whispering sound" as Elijah describes it in the first reading.

Let me finish with two questions and let us take some moments to reflect about them: Did you ever have a significant experience of God? Did this affect the way you live and treat others?

Fr. Wolfgang Felber, SJ

Welcome to All Saints! Our collection today is for All Saints. Many of us are gone for the summer and return in August but would like to welcome you to our community.

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