

Six months ago, researchers at the University of Michigan School of Public Health were quoted in an article about health problems caused by environmental noise. They claim that an estimated 100-plus million people are exposed to noises loud enough to cause serious noise-related health issues.

They aren't alone. In Britain and Europe, researchers claim that unchecked noise can raise stress hormones in the body leading to heart attacks, high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system.

Just the sound of light traffic can be enough to cause cardiac issues. The hum of an electrical transformer can impact sleep. And a mere whisper can be enough to cause annoyance.

In a sense, I can relate to this - for the past three years, I lived on the east side of Saginaw right next to St. Mary's Hospital. I used to sleep through rescue helicopters, ambulance sirens, and random gun shots in the city. After a month here, the loudest things I've heard at night are the sump pump and the refrigerator.

According to one article, our government dropped its interest in regulating environmental noise back in 1982 and that the US is at least 10 years behind Europe in dealing with noise-related health issues.

Today is the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

In the First Reading, we hear about the Prophet Elijah. In the passages leading up to today's reading, Elijah has confronted, and defeated the 450 false prophets of Ba'al, and is fleeing the wrath of the wicked Queen Jezebel. After 40 days in the wilderness, and living in a cave, finally God reveals Himself to Elijah.

There are three remarkable phenomenon that play out: a windstorm, an earthquake, and a wildfire. But despite the apparent power of these events, Scripture tells us that the LORD was not in any of them.

Rather, God reveals Himself to Elijah in "*a tiny whispering sound.*"

In today's Gospel from St. Matthew chapter 14, we hear how the disciples are in a boat in the middle of strong winds and heavy seas ... and along comes Jesus walking on water ... and we're told that "*they were terrified.*"

Peter, in a show of boldness asks Jesus to bid him to walk on the water.

And Jesus says one word: "*Come.*"

So Peter sets out, but he gets distracted by the wind and the waves. And once he is distracted, it's all over. And Peter begins to sink - crying out to Jesus: "*Lord, save me!*"

And Jesus says nothing. But "*stretche[s] out his hand and [catches] Peter*". Finally as they get into the boat, we are told that "*the wind died down*" and with it the waves.

The storm was freaking out the disciples. It was all they could see. But for Jesus, the storm was no big deal. Rather it was just a way on to the next thing ... a path to be walked upon ... underfoot.

For us, in our day-to-day lives, we can often get preoccupied with the turmoil and the troubles ... the shaking, the blowing, the burning ... the winds and the waves. And quite often, we get too involved in working out our own ways to deal with these problems.

Yet Jesus is right there waiting for us to say something ... to call out to Him ... to ask Him for something ... anything ... for some help in our time of need.

And ... God ... is ... there. Jesus ... is ... right ... there.

But we're so caught up in the noise and the mess ... that we lose our focus on Him. And honestly, those things ... they are nothing more than a distraction ... and in the final tally - they are really nothing more than a means to an end ... not worthy of much attention. Certainly not worth losing our focus on God and Jesus Christ.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us keep our eyes fixed on our Savior. And in the trials and tribulations of life ... in the storms and the shakings that come across our path ... let us call out to Him ... to save us.

He only asks one thing of us ... that we "*Come.*" ... and follow Him.

*Saturday: Credo*

*Sunday:* [We now move on to another sort of water - the waters of Baptism ... the gateway to the Sacramental life ... the wind which is the Holy Spirit, and the fire which is the Light of Christ.

With confidence in God's love for us, and listening for His voice calling us to "*Come.*" let us make our prayers through these petitions.]