

Daily Homily

St. Ephrem, d. 373; deacon, Doctor of the Church

Optional Memorial

Week Ten in Ordinary Time

9 June 2020

[USCCB Daily Reading](#)

I love this first reading. Elijah, the prophet, now here is a person whose company you must take up. He is intimidating, bold, clever, fearless, faithful, radiant.

I love this episode with the widow of Zarephath. It is a David and Goliath story. So typical of God. God chooses the least likely, God chooses the already failing, the ones on their last leg, the nobodies of the land, the forgotten and God shows up and raises them up with great surprise. This is what is going on here. Also, While God is working this in the life of this down and out widow and her son, God is also intentionally insulting the culture and the times. Awesome!

Quick background: Because of King Ahab's lack of fidelity to God, because of his horrible wife, Jezebel, and her wishes for the kingdom to be given over to the god, Baal, Elijah the prophet walks onto their scene and disrupts their parade. His words and actions do not go over well. Elijah, through the word of the God of Israel – our God, declares a drought in the land of the god of Baal. Ironically, Baal is the god of water, drink, and overflowing plenty. A drought, however, ravages the land.

Elijah is sent away. He is sent into the dangerous unforgiving, dry and dust and death of the land of Sidon. This is the second time in Elijah's story that God provides for him. The first time ravens bring him bread. This time, a starving widow is to bring him cake. I am not sure which is more farfetched to believe. Elijah, however, has the personality and the stamina to believe it.

Elijah sounds like a horrible guest. This widow and her son, victims of the drought, are about to eat their last meal. Dead and dry twigs are aplenty, but the flour and oil will run dry and empty. In the midst of this Elijah asks for cake. Can you imagine? The nerve. The gall. But you see, it is the Lord who has the nerve and the boldness. It is the Lord who is in charge and knows what will happen and what can happen. The Lord told Elijah, "I have designated a widow there to provide for you."

The god, Baal, has disappointed and let the people down. The overflowing god has dried up. The god of water and drink has provided nothing but dust. Our God, however, has shown up. God has knocked on the door of this widow and her son and has asked for cake. Again, it sounds so crazy – she actually complies! Even after divulging her predicament, she turns the oven to 350 degrees, gets out her loaf pan, and begins to mix away. It is nuts. They are on the brink of death and yet, denial abounds. So we think.

Yes, the situation is dire and even devastating. The situation is sad and horrible. When things are this way, God is at His best. In starvation, God provides food. In desperation, God provides hope. In times of drought and dryness, God overflows. In times of denial, faith abounds. In times of death, life comes forth.

The widow complies and her flour and oil do not run out. Baal could not deliver such a courtesy. The one and only true God, the Lord, however, does.

Where are we running dry? Where do we see a lack of results? Where do we time and again run into roadblocks and droughts? Where does discouragement find us? When the culture and the times around us lean toward Baal, how does the Lord prompt us to lean in His direction – where the flour is plentiful and the oil never runs dry?