

13 Ordinal 2022
26 June 2022

Those who come to daily Mass here know this,
but even though I shouldn't have a favorite... I do...
when it comes to my favorite prophet, hands down I would name Elijah.
Several weeks ago, during our daily Masses
the Church allowed us to read through a part of his story
over the course of several days.
One of my favorite episodes in scripture was one of them.
We read how Elijah, stood as the only prophet of the Lord
while all the other prophets of his time had been put to death,
and stands up against the 100s of prophets of the god, Baal.

Now, we may think that Baal is an ancient god that no one
believes in any more... but that's not the case.
We may not name our belief is this god, Baal...
but Baal is the god of my happiness, my pleasure first,
the god of my will be done,
the god of me, myself, and I...
Baal is the god of getting rid of any inconvenience,
even if it means aborting life itself.
Baal is the god of I have better things to do than what I should do
to grow in faith and prayer and participation at Mass.
Baal is the god of laziness and indifference.
You get what I'm saying? Right?
Baal, we don't name it as such, because we are so advanced today...
but still the same thing as in ancient days.
So mighty Elijah comes up against the hundreds of prophets
who espouse this god of Baal.

Single, solitary Elijah sets up this game, this test of sorts.
He tells the prophets of Baal
to build an altar... put wood on top of it...
and a sheep of sorts for sacrifice to their god
and Elijah too, will build an altar as well.
And the 100's of prophets will invoke their god,
and then Elijah will invoke our God and the one who answers

will be the true God that they should follow.

So Elijah, being the gentleman, tells the 100s of prophets,
"You go first."

So they do... build an altar and they carry on with their invocations and litanies
and the answer from Baal is this: absolutely nothing.

So the prophets are despondent, unfulfilled, unsatisfied,
frustrated, in a rage almost... which is the fruit of
the god of Baal (even to this day).

So, Elijah being somewhat cheeky on that day, taunts them...

"Well, maybe your god is sleeping so maybe you have to be louder."

And so the 100s of prophets listen to him

and they send up all sorts of noise and havoc,

they dance around and create a frenzy,

they get so into their raucous, that they begin to hurt each other

and some of them become a bloody mess.

Baal answers in this way... nothing, emptiness, unfulfilled, dissatisfied.

Then Elijah says, "My turn."

He builds his altar and puts wood on top of it
and an animal for sacrifice.

He says a prayer.

And this is how the Lord God,

our God,

this is how He answers ... he answers with fire.

The altar is embraced and enveloped in flame.

The 100s are enlightened and

the proof of His presence is made known.

That image has carried me through these past couple of weeks,

Where mighty prophet Elijah has been standing next to me in my work
and together we have been calling down fire...

not a fire that the apostles wanted to call down on towns

that did not welcome the Lord...

not a fire that harms and destroys... not a fire of death...

but to call down the Lord's fire is to call down

the proof of His presence.

So true story...
with this being said,
I was called to one of the area nursing homes to anoint a woman,
not a parishioner from St. Brendan or Richard,
her name was Arlene..
she was declining rapidly.
So I went... I walk into the room...
and sure enough there was Arlene lying in bed,
and her granddaughter and the granddaughter's husband were there.
We talk for a bit and then I started the anointing...
there's a part in the anointing where the priest lays hands on the individual
and prays in silence...
so feeling Elijah next to me...
I prayed for fire to come down on Arlene... not to harm of course,
but a fire to warm her,
to embrace her, a fire to help her and guide her
so she could see clearly as she journey's from this life to the next.
I finish the anointing.
I chat a bit with the granddaughter and her husband and I leave.
As soon as I close the door to their room
and step into the hallway... the fire alarms in the building go off.
(God has a sense of humor!)

As I'm walking down the hall think "what have I done"
A nurse comes hurriedly down the hall and says
"I'm sure it's a test, Father, but take the stairs just in case."

My friends do not be afraid,
to call down the fire of the Lord God in and on
the altars and sacrifices of our times and your lives.
Not a fire of hurt and destruction... which always leads to ruin...
but the fire of our Lord God, which warms,
envelopes and embraces,
and enlightens with the brightness of light.
Do not be afraid to call down the fire of the Lord God.

Elisha, the farmer turned disciples of Elijah, did this...
in our Frassati men's group,
one of our members said it so well today...

Elisha burned up oxen and equipment...
basically burned up his livelihood as a way to say,
"I will follow the prophet, and there's no looking back."

That's not the reaction of those that Jesus calls today...
While the Twelve ... the fisherman and tax collector
responded to Jesus with immediacy... they leave everything right away...
Jesus calls these people in the Gospel today...
he calls them to step into the fire,
and they respond with mere, mediocre sparks...
they respond with
excuses,
to-do lists,
other priorities...
the god, Baal, biting them with unfulfillment.

Don't be afraid, call down the fire of the Lord God...
a fire that warms, that envelopes and embraces, and enlightens...
especially now as the Supreme Court
has in a monumental move reversed Roe-vs-Wade...
generations of peaceful prayer at work...
and now we step into the fire, as a Church, we can't fail it now...
as we call on the fire of promoting a culture of life,
and reverse this culture of death that we are in...
the fire of virtue called chastity and purity... no matter what vocation,
we are all called to this lifestyle.
The fire of helping and supporting those
women and men who find themselves in challenging situations,
caring for them,
and nurturing their lives and the lives of those
gifted by conception as a being gift and life from God.
And as pro-choice groups already plot for a "summer of rage"
targeting especially Catholic Churches,
we don't call down a destructive fire - that the Lord rebukes -
but rather we call on the fire of the Lord God
that warms, envelopes, embraces, enlightens.

In the people that you encounter this week,

in those that you live with and share life with,
in the work that you do and the work that is waiting to get done,
in the decisions that need to be made,
life decisions or just
decision big and small ...
don't be afraid to call down the fire of the Lord,
not a fire that harms or hurts,
but a fire that warms, embraces, envelopes, and enlightens
a fire that the Lord wanted the world to be ablaze,
a fire that saints fanned into flame by their example and witness,
a fire that proves the presence of God.