

We all have troubles. Whether it's relationship, employment, finance, or illness affecting our health. We all have our troubles. And none of us can avoid them. Some may be out of work, some may be physically sick, some of us may be financially depleted because of the COVID-19's economy. But we all are emotionally devastated.

Some problems are of our own making; others force their ways into our lives without invitation.

In our first reading we find the great prophet Elijah on the run. He had recently displeased Queen Jezebel who was out to get him. So scared of Jezebel that Elijah fled the country and went all the way to the mountain of Horeb, and hid in a cave there. Until he heard the voice of God who came to him, gently and very quietly, in "a tiny whispering sound."

And in the Gospel reading, we find Jesus alone up on a mountain during the day and in the evening walked on the water toward the boat with his disciples in it being tossed about by rough waves.

When Peter recognized it was Jesus, he asked to walk toward the Lord across the water. "**Come,**" said Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and began walking. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he walked on the water just fine. But when he noticed how strong the wind was, how the water was in such a turmoil, and when he took his eyes off Christ he began to sink. "**Lord, save me!**" he cried out

Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and caught Peter. "**O you of little faith,**" the Lord exclaimed.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Life is unpredictable. Just a couple of months ago, when we reopened our church doors on May 29, the Feast of Pentecost, we thought that the normalcy of life as we had known it, would surely return to us. But

here we are again, sadly “parks, beaches to close and inter-island quarantine returns,” as recently announced by the State government (*Hawaii News Now – August 6*).

Like the apostles being tossed about on the sea and wondering where Jesus was when they needed him, we might feel we are left entirely alone to face problems and wrestle with the pandemic, but the reality is that nothing that concerns us goes unnoticed by God.

And like Elijah who prayed for death in order to avoid his problem and Peter started sinking, we all need to be reminded that God is constantly with us and caring for us. Never a moment passes, never a thought or a worry goes through our minds, or a problem faces us, without God being aware of it. Jesus promised he would be with us until the end of time, and he is.

God was with Elijah all the time, though he did not feel it, and Jesus in spirit was in that boat with his apostles all the time, though they too did not seem to know it.

Put simply --- God is always here with us, coming to us, pursuing us, and he simply asks that we do what we can to come to him, move toward him, journey down the path to the One who wants to calm the storms of our lives. God always does his part, but asks that we in faith do the same.

“... Ever since churches closed, my wife and I have been attending Mass online. And I still pray, maybe now more than ever — at home, in the car, while walking in the park — just not at church,” wrote Melvin S. Arrington Jr. of Mississippi in *Our Sunday Visitor* newspapers.

“I’ve also spent a lot of time reflecting on Pope Francis’ statement that COVID-19 is not God’s judgment on us but rather a call for us to judge what’s most important and to start acting on it. I miss the Eucharist, the

communal aspects of worship and interacting with people,” he said. “The quarantine can take away our church attendance, but it can’t stop us from praying, worshipping and doing charitable work.”

“During this period of withdrawal from the world, I’ve seen my faith challenged, but at the same time in some ways it has been strengthened ...”

Arrington continued, *“My heart breaks for those who have suffered greatly over the last few weeks. Many lives and livelihoods have been lost. And I lament having to stay away from church, friends and activities. More hardships lie ahead, but as we read in Romans, nothing on earth, and that includes COVID-19, can separate us from God’s love (cf. 8:38-39). Absolutely nothing.”*

Indeed, nothing can stop God from loving us and coming to us. Jesus did not let harm come to Peter, but rather “saves” him and invites him to believe a little more deeply, trust a little more completely, keep his eyes fixed a little more intently on the Lord who promises to never abandon us, but rather is with us in our struggles --- no matter how painful or frightening or heart-breaking they may be.

Let us do our best to trust in God while it is happening. Let us look for the Lord, not so much in the dramatic, extraordinary events unfolding but in the ordinary, the people we live with, the day-to-day things we do. What is truly uplifting, is life-changing, is life-giving. But it takes faith. It takes paying attention. It takes expecting to find God and experiencing the ever-presence of God, not simply once in a while, but every second of every day, in every whisper that calls out to us. Amen.