

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

Before I began my preparation for the priesthood, I once spent a couple of months living in California on business. While there, I was able to visit on weekends such beautiful places as Joshua Tree National Park and Yosemite National Park. It truly is a treat to be able to experience such wonderful places of natural beauty. However, I missed out on one experience that I was hoping to have while I was in California. Earthquakes. There was not a single earthquake; at least not one that could be felt, while I was there. I've never felt the earth shake and I was really, really hoping to experience an earthquake before I left, but it did not happen. I was and still am mightily disappointed. No, I did not want to have the "Big One" happen while I was there (as far as I was concerned the "Big One" could wait until I got back to the Midwest), but a Magnitude Four or Five quake would have been nice. That is, large enough to be felt, but small enough to not cause any damage.

The prophet Elijah is experiencing something similar to this in today's First Reading from the First Book of Kings. Elijah has been directed by God to serve Him and to await His arrival. Elijah experiences three different natural processes that on any other day might have been taken as proof that God was nearby. First, there was a powerful (indeed an awesome) windstorm. Then, there was an earthquake. Finally, there was fire. However, none of these were the harbinger of the arrival of the Lord. Instead, it was the last, the quietest, a whispering sound that indicated the presence of God.

So often we want God to make Himself known to us in a way that is undisputable. A mighty windstorm, or earthquake, or fire would be good examples of this; but there are others. However, we are also directed to pay attention to God. God shouldn't have to be a giant billboard with letters twenty feet high struggling to get our attention; or an earthquake shaking everything for hundreds of miles. If we are paying attention to God then it is not the giant obvious signs that we should be looking for, but rather the smaller, more subtle, signs that we should be on the watch for like the whispering sound. The best way to notice these subtle signs is to take the time by yourself to quietly pray. This time of prayer need not be very long in duration. Even a few minutes a day will be helpful. However, we definitely need to make the time to listen for the Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor