

19th Sunday in OT: Yr. A – 2020
[1 Kgs 19:9-13; Rom 9:1-5; Mt 14:22-33]

What dominates our life? When Peter was focused on Christ he did the impossible of walking on the water. When he took notice of the waves and the wind, he was dominated by these forces and began to sink. The word ‘dominate’ comes from the same root word as *Dominus* which means ‘Lord’ in Latin. In other words, who is Lord of our life? Knowing Peter’s outcome, how can we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord more often?

First, we should set spiritual goals. For example, make a commitment to pray 15-30 minutes a day, read the daily scriptures, go to confession more often, attend Mass weekly and start preparing your soul for Heaven. Having no spiritual goals is like driving without a destination, we are not sure where we will end up. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati said, *“The faith given to me in baptism suggests to me surely: by yourself you will do nothing, but if you have God as the center of all your action, then you will reach the goal.”*

Second, we need a dose of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace means we are constantly aware of God’s presence living within and working through us. Brother Lawrence, a 17th century Carmelite monk in France, coined the phrase: *“practice the presence of God.”* He was assigned to kitchen duty in the monastery, where he prepared the daily meals and cleaned up afterwards. Even in the mist of his dull chores, Brother Lawrence believed God could be invited into anything and His presence could be enjoyed anytime. Brother Lawrence wrote, *“I began to live as if there were no one except God and me in the world.”* Together, God and Brother Lawrence cooked meals, ran errands, and scrubbed pots. That’s sanctifying grace at work.

Third, we must seek Jesus in the Eucharist. The most obvious and least practiced way to keep our eyes on Jesus is through the Eucharist at Mass and in adoration. Think of Mass as the Heavenly meal and adoration as our extended fellowship and conversation with God in Heaven. Adoration is the “better part” chosen by Mary who was focused on Christ when He entered her home. Her sister Martha, on the other hand, was busied with many things. St. John Vianney asked a farmer that came to church each day what he did during adoration. The farmer answered, *“I just look at him and he looks at me.”* This works, said St. Francis de Sales, because, *“Between lovers, the eyes speak more eloquently than the tongue.”*

Fourth, surround yourself with visual reminders and sacramentals. One should be able to enter into our home, car, or see us and think: this person is obviously Catholic. For example, wear a crucifix, medal or carry a pocket rosary. We can decorate our homes with statues, pictures, icons, holy water and crucifixes. In our car we need a rosary for the road and some holy cards in the visor, because it’s dangerous out there. Whenever I took a test in school I used to write J-M-J on the top of my paper like Archbishop Fulton Sheen to remind myself of the presence of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Lastly, we can pray the scriptures using the official prayer book of the Catholic Church called the Liturgy of the Hours. It consists of five prayer periods throughout the day, utilizing canticles, select readings, intercessions, but primarily the Old Testament psalms. After all, the psalms were Christ’s prayer book. They express the human condition of the global Body of Christ, for at any moment someone is feeling: sorrow, anguish, humility, repentance, or praise. Why not always use spontaneous or made-up prayers, instead of the Liturgy of the Hours? The Liturgy of the Hours introduces far more vivid words into our prayer time and puts us into harmony with countless Christians around the world. The easiest way to start is to download an app such as “iBreviary” on the smartphone.

St. Paul referred to Jesus as ‘Lord’ or ‘Dominus’ meaning that Jesus must dominate or be the number one focus of our life. If not, all the other outside forces will begin to drown us as it did for Peter. For St. Augustine said, *“If Jesus is not the Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.”*