

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.  
Mass for the Servant of God, Father Vincent R. Capodanno,  
on the anniversary of his death  
4 September 2019



What draws us here this evening? For many it is familiarity with a hero. We have heard his story, we served with him, he was part of our family, he was a Marine, my responsibilities bring me here. There are many answers, but one thing is common. The Servant of God, Vincent R. Capodanno was extraordinary. Why?

Having experienced the presence of Almighty God in his life, he had to make a difference. I selected the readings for this evening, because somehow Father Capodanno recognized the authentic presence of God and opened himself to that gentle breeze.

A few years ago on my way to the PMI in Lourdes, I stopped at the Nunciature. When it was time to go to Orly Airport to catch my flight, the Nuncio insisted that I take a cab instead of the subway. I was unwilling, but obliged.

When I boarded the vehicle, the cabbie looked in the rear view mirror and asked "Est-ce que je peux vous parler?" (May I talk to you?)? You are a priest? He exposed his problem and I gave him some advice.

At the end of same pilgrimage I decided to make a final visit to the Grotto, but chose less direct route to avoid the sun. A Spanish woman stepped into my path and did not ask if I spoke Spanish, but only if I were a priest, would I hear her confession.

For the first incident my reflection came later, but the second was almost immediate: Our Lady had sent me to her. Divine Providence put me in that cab and on the path of that woman. I had to be coerced, but those destined by Almighty God for a significant role are there. They knew where they should be in order to facilitate the saving action of the Lord.

The first lesson that the Servant of God teaches us is to look for signs of God's presence, action, and call in our lives. Attention is necessary. Elijah and Peter both tell us

about an experience of the unknowable essence, transcendent, supreme, and holy. Assure us of continuity and teach us to grow.

We are consider the first reading where Elijah is in distress. He has devastated the pagan prophets and must flee the wrath of Queen Jezebel. In his hiding he seeks the comforting presence of God. He is ordered out of the cave and experiences so many of the typical manifestations of divine power and presence: wind, earthquake, and fire. However, God chooses the small whispering sound. Elijah must adapt himself to the manner chosen by God.

Almighty God continues to come to us in many ways and His presence might not always fit into our categories. It is easy to be confused, frightened, or to think that we see not the Lord, but a ghost. The lack of prayer, indeed, causes the disciples to see Jesus as a ghost, something unreal, one who does not pray is a person of little faith, doubts, and can even lose his faith.

“God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from His face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals Himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

Our conversation with Him becomes even more important, because we can only respond in one way to the presence of God: our prayer, our need to be in contact with the Father, to confront our attitudes with His call. Despite great gifts from God our faith vacillates. We must continually renew the freshness of our faith with assiduous contacts with Jesus Christ—hence the obligation to participate at least once a week in the Mass, that supreme sacrifice of Divine Love that unites us with the Lord and with all who believe in His continuing specific presence in our midst.

That is what sustained Father Capodanno. He heard the voice of the Lord in his prayer and responded with incredible heroic virtue. In the thick of the battle he knew that his place was with his Marines. He was impelled by his faith to ensure that they could experience the comforting presence of the Lord which he knew that he brought exclusively in the sacraments.

That commitment and fidelity have touched us and renewed us in our commitments. His example leads us to seek the Lord's presence and to be renewed in our vocation. Yes, the Lord calls each person to use his or her talents to build up the Body of Christ. No one in this splendid chapel is superfluous. Each one has been endowed by the Father with unique gifts, but we must be attentive to the whispering presence of the Lord. Sometimes it is so difficult to perceive Him in our midst.

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<sup>1</sup> CCC 2567.

Night in the Gospel is a time of prayer for the Lord, but of terror for the Apostles. When they see Jesus walking on the water, they are overcome by even more fear, the ancient slave-master of humanity. It is calmed by the gentle words of Christ: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid". (365 invitations in Bible to fear not).

Peter is suddenly filled with bravado, but human initiative is not sufficient to meet Jesus: one responds to a call and has to keep his or her eyes fixed on Him. When we begin to depend on our own abilities or the shared wisdom of the ignorant we sink. Father Capodanno obviously had his eyes fixed on Jesus Christ and followed Him. He told others not to be afraid. That was his final mission.

Because that mission was so worthwhile and beneficial to others, we make his life and efforts known. We pray for so many who are in need and look to the Servant of God for favors. We believe that his numbering among the saints of the Church will encourage all of us to meet the Lord and to live better lives. Each one of us is called to sainthood, to life forever with Almighty God in heaven. Impossible task, but with divine grace everything is possible. We need his guidance to be still and hear the voice of God.

It is not easy to remain faithful, to trust in the Lord who always guides the boat, His Church. Storms as powerful as Dorian today or the next hurricane to be stirred up, cause us to wonder, to be overcome with anxiety, and to begin to look away. That is when we must remember that the Lord is with us as the Head of the Church. His guidance and power are sufficient even in the worst of storms, be they of weather, adversity, scandal, or challenge.

Tonight, as we are gathered by the memory of Father Capodanno, we also pray for the repose of the soul of Lydia, his sister-in-law, we pray for all of those who invoke his intercession for particular needs, we beg the Lord of the harvest to increase the number of laborers in the field.

We are drawn by a great priest who was faithful to his vocation, despite orders to the contrary. Remember that in the daily fulfillment of your duties, dear brother priests. Fidelity to the priesthood of Jesus Christ comes before everything else. Each of us here wants to learn from him to hear the gentle voice of God. In the taxicab, in the shrine, in the myriad activities of every day, we strive to learn how to hear and respond to the Lord in that gentle breeze.