

## Leather Belts

Throughout these past weeks we have been listening to the story of Elijah which has been dramatic at times with his epic battle against the false prophets and his encounter with the living God on mount Horeb. It has also been a little strange because at one point he is speaking to King Ahab but then he crouches and puts his head between his knees or when he was hiding by the Jordan and being fed bread and meat by ravens. The question might arise: why is the Church presenting us with the story of the prophet Elijah?

Many times in the Gospel, Jesus refers to the law and the prophets by referring to the two great figures who represent them: Moses AND Elijah. Elijah was a pivotal figure during the monarchy of Israel because he called the kings to repentance for their idolatry and was persecuted for it. But I think Elijah was most well known for his clothing.

Interestingly enough, 2 Kings 1:8 describes him in this way: the servants of the king described him as "A HAIRY man, with a LEATHER BELT around his WAIST...It is ELIJAH the Tishbite."

Fast forward several hundred years and JOHN THE BAPTIST comes on the scene by the Jordan wearing "a garment of camel's HAIR and a LEATHER GIRDLE around his WAIST" (Mt 3:4).

However, their parallels do not end there. John and Elijah both called wicked kings to repentance, both were prophets but most importantly both prepared the way for a successor who did even greater things. Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's SPIRIT by the JORDAN RIVER and he would go on to CLEANSE A LEPER (2 Kings 5:1-19), raise a child FROM THE DEAD (2 Kings 4:32-37) and MULTIPLY BREAD to feed a crowd of a hundred men (2 Kings 4:42-44).

If my memory serves me well, I recall there was another figure who received the SPIRIT by the JORDAN RIVER (Mt 3:13), who also RAISED A CHILD from the dead (Mt 9:23-25), CLEANSED A LEPER (Mt 8:2-4) and MULTIPLIED BREAD TO feed crowds of 5000 and 7000 men (Jn 6:9-14).

Just as Elijah prepared the way for Elisha, so too John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. But these parallels point to something more significant than the fact that Jesus was the New Elisha and great prophet.

It pointed to the fact that the return of Elijah would precede the coming of the Lord:

*Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes (Mal 4:5)*

God had prepared the people for HIS OWN COMING by sending John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah, through prophecies and signs, but sadly many of Jesus' contemporaries did not recognize the presence of the Lord in their midst who was coming to bring salvation.

Are we not the same?

Do we fail to recognize our Lord in the gift of his Spirit working in our DAILY lives to make us holy? Do we miss ***the inspirations of the Holy Spirit*** and neglect his sanctifying presence?

“My Jesus, it is TRULY EASY to become HOLY; it just takes A LITTLE good will...IF the soul is FAITHFUL to this grace from God, she can IN A SHORT TIME reach the HIGHEST LEVEL OF HOLINESS that a created being can attain here below...the *shortest road is **faithfulness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit***” —St. Faustina

However, sometimes our hearts can be so BOGGED DOWN with such noise and distraction that we are prevented from hearing *the still small voice of the Spirit* who is ever sanctifying us, inspiring us and guiding us. Let us CLEAR THE CLUTTER from our hearts and *listen intently to the Spirit* that we may ascend to the heights of sanctity in the flaming chariot of the Spirit.