Sunday, October 5, 1975
THE SACRED IN THE ORDINARY
I Kings 19:11-12; Mark 14:22-25

Often when we think of something as being “sacred” it means to us th.at it is separate, out of the ordinary, special and there is that aspect to what we think of as “sacred.” Thus, we speak of “sacred” moments in our lives, those times that had special meaning.

Some sacred experiences are planned like weddings and other events which are turning points in our lives — the birth of a child, the baptism of a baby· or a young person, our confirmation and other such events. These are not ordinary happenings, and they are sacred because of mean and because our lives have been deeply affected by them. Most sacred events change us for the better.

But there are also those sacred happenings which occur in our lives which are unexpected and not planned. Throughout the Bible we read of the experience of persons who met God when they least expected it and those times were sacred.

Moses encountered God in a sacred moment while he was tending a flock of sheep on the side of a mountain. It was this sacred meeting, unexpected, which became his call to lead his people out of slavery.

And in this morning’s scripture reading from the Old Testament, we heard again the account of Elijah’s meeting with God while he was hiding in a cave in fear of his life. He did not expect to meet God there. More than that as the Bible account points out, God was not in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, but Elijah was most aware of God in the silence which followed all of these. This was the sacred moment, not the sensational display of power in wind, earthquake and fire. Elijah experienced the sacred in the ordinary, as did Moses.

The Apostle Paul’s most sacred moment happened unexpectedly as he was traveling along the road on his way to Damascus. Here again was the sacred in the ordinary.

We discover the sacred, God himself, most uniquely revealed in the most ordinary event, coming to us in a baby, born in a stable with ordinary people as his parents. God didn’t come to us as a clergyman, or as a priest, or even a Pope.

No doubt many people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah because he wasn’t sensational enough. Some of the people of his time could only see· him as a carpenter from Nazareth and therefore quite ordinary. Tl1.ey said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” That town had never been remarkable for anything in the way of religion. It had never produced a great person, or a prophet. It is not even mentioned in the Old Testament. That’s how ordinary it was.

So it is that the “sacred", God Himself, is often to be found in the ordinary experiences and events of life. That’s certainly a large part of the meaning of Holy Communion. ‘What could be more ordinary than bread and wine? It was found on every table in the culture in which Jesus lived.

What could be more ordinary than eating and drinking? All of us do it every day — it’s what keeps us alive.

So, Jesus took bread and wine — and as the Gospel of Mark remembers it — "As they were. eating, Jesus took bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body,' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

Here is the sacred act of God being revealed and remembered in the ordinary. Some people miss the sacred because they look in the wrong places or because they do not expect it to appear so often in the ordinary. Yet God often comes to us quietly, almost silently, unexpectedly, and peacefully.

And we are often most "God-like" and filled with God's spirit, not when we are sensational or extraordinary, but as Paul puts it, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

Experience the sacred this morning in the ordinary — in the bread and wine of Communion, and in our eating together. It may help us to be open to God in many of the other ordinary events of our lives. Amen.