

3rd Ordinary Sunday B

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 Cor 7:29-31

Mk 1:14-20

There was a man and a woman sitting side by side as they were traveling to Hawaii. In the middle of the flight the woman pulled out her Bible and began to read. The man looked at her, gave a little chuckle and went back to what he was doing. After a while the man asked her, “You don’t believe all that stuff in the Bible, do you?” The lady said, “Of course I do.” He said, “What about the story of that guy who was swallowed by the whale? Do you believe he survived three days in a whale?” The woman said, “I believe that story—the story of Jonah. I would believe even if the Bible said that he swallowed the whale! But I don’t know how he survived. I will ask him when I get to heaven.” The man said, “What if he is not in heaven but in hell?” “Then you ask him,” said the woman.

In the first reading of today we see Jonah making **God’s message** known to the people of Nineveh. He disliked the Gentile people of Nineveh and thought that they were not worthy of God’s mercy. They were terrible people doing terrible things. Contrary to his expectation, the people promptly responded to his message, believed in God and repented for their evil behavior. It opened the eyes of Jonah to realize that God’s love and mercy is not limited and that His offer of salvation is for all. In the **second reading** Paul reminds us that we are called to live in the world, but we are not of the world. This world is not eternal. So live with a sense of detachment.

Like Jonah, Jesus begins his preaching with a call for repentance. He invited His listeners to believe in the **gospel**. “The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” “Repent” comes from the Greek word “metanoia,” which means to change one’s mind or direction. So repentance means to take a complete change of direction in our lives. Repentance is not merely saying, “I am sorry,” but also promising that I will change my life. True repentance is not just when we feel sorry for the consequences of sin, but when we begin to hate sin itself. It is not that we avoid sin because of its consequences, but because we hate sin itself.

In the gospel of today, we also find Jesus **calling** Peter, Andrew, James and John. Those whom Jesus called were just fisherman with no social standing, wealth or learning. Jesus does not call us for what we are, but for what we can become. What Christ needs is not so much our ability but our availability. Jesus promised to make them fishers of men. What Jesus teaches is not a course of study but a way of life to follow. They accepted the invitation and left everything to follow Jesus right away. Their response to God’s invitation was very prompt. Similarly, our response to God’s invitation should be **prompt**. Jesus called His disciples in the midst of their work. Jesus meets us and calls us in our own life situations.

What if Jesus comes in here right now and asks us to follow Him? How many of us would leave everything and follow Him? We would have so many excuses—my grandson’s first ball game is next week, my son’s graduation is this year, I can’t cancel my trip to the Holy Land, my family reunion, I have to take care of my animals at home, or I am just too busy. The disciples leaving their nets and boats meant leaving everything to follow Christ. What do we need to **leave behind**? For some, it may be quitting the job and entering formation to become a priest or a religious. For some others, it may be leaving a hobby or obsession that keeps you from Church or prayer or serving others. For still others, it may be ending a relationship that is not healthy and not leading you to Christ. He calls us every day to leave our bad habits, evil inclinations, impure thoughts, and dishonest ways and so on. When we hear that call, let us promptly respond.