

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

A young boy wanted to go down to the lake to fish, and his mother asked him to take his little sister with him. He said, "Mom, don't make me take her with me. The last time she came with me, I didn't catch a single fish." The mother said, "I'll talk to her, and I promise this time she won't make any noise." The boy said, "Mom, it wasn't the noise. She ate all my bait!"

Dear Friends,

There is a famous quote from St. Francis de Sales, "Bloom where you are planted,". Life has given so many opportunities for us to make our life beautiful. God has created this world for us to properly make use of it. God has constant concern for us. His love continues in the present and beyond.

Last week, the readings challenged us to plant the seed to introduce God/Jesus to our family members. I believe that helped us to do some work individually. God's call is continuous and is not one time. This week, the liturgy invites us to go further to listen to God's message.

As you know the story of Jonah, God gave him the message to go to Nineveh. He tried to run away, because personally he did not want Nineveh to be saved, but being in the residence of the whale's interior gave him something to think about. He prayed the Psalms inside there (Jonah 2:3). There was a transformation in him as well as the people of Nineveh. We read in the first reading today that he delivered the message. His words were taken seriously by everyone. There was a complete transformation. Jonah was quite repelled by the call God gave him. God never gave up on him until he went to Nineveh.

In the gospel, Jesus gives the same message. Powerful words: **repent, believe in the gospel**. The disciples heard the message already through John the Baptist. Now they are hearing it for the second time. The message is the same. So, they were able to follow him immediately, leaving everything behind. They were intrigued by Christ and there was a level of trust which caused them to follow.

As for the apostles, they did not run away. Almost impulsively they followed Jesus. Possibly they wanted political action. With Jesus' gentle guidance they found out gradually that following the Messiah really meant something quite different. In contrast with Jonah, the apostles imagined the best. But they followed Jesus into the passion and crucifixion!

During the Covid Pandemic, Pope Francis declared the third Sunday of Ordinary Time to be dedicated to the Word of God to help the church grow rich in love and faithful witness. Salvation, faith, unity, and mercy all depend on knowing Christ and sacred Scripture, he said in a new document. Devoting a special day "to the celebration, study

and dissemination of the word of God” will help the church “experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world,” the Pope said.

Pope Benedict XVI called for a deeper reflection on the word of God. The word of God is the good News. He says it in two ways.

1. Good News (euangelion) is meant to bring about change. It need not be ‘good’, meaning pleasant.
2. Good News is meant to make us act. It does not fill us with information but leads us to transformation.

Are we running away? Or running toward the word of God? Are we scared of the word of God? We are given such a direct invitation to do God’s will.

So, what does the word of God say to us today?

In our society we are filled with information, especially a lot of negative information. Neil Postman, in his book, “Amusing Ourselves to Death” accused that TV has turned everything into entertainment. Today social media and our current news channels bring all information half baked, misinformation, one sided versions.

How can we listen to God?

1. Avoid prejudices. We all already have prejudices in place about what we want and how things ought to go like Jonah.
2. Bring a level of trust in you and God through prayers, reading the scripture, and spending time in silent Adoration like in the Rocking Chair Prophet.
3. Put in your daily calendar a time for God.