

Archbishop's CMA Audio Homily

January 20/21, 2024 : Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jon 3:1-5, 10; Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mark 1: 15

This is Archbishop Dennis Schnurr with some reflections on today's readings and how they remind us that we are sent by God the Father to be Christ for others in this troubled world.

In the gospel, the message that Jesus proclaims at the very beginning of His public ministry in Galilee is an urgent one, then and now: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." And the gospel we are to believe is the Good News that God sent us His only begotten Son into the world not just so that He might share in our humanity, but also through His Death and Resurrection, that we might share in his Divinity.

Following Jesus, as the first apostles did after abandoning their nets, is not simply a matter of repeating Our Lord's teaching, or waiting on His instruction. Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that Christian discipleship is "an encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 1). In other words, the definitive choice to become a follower of Christ is to encounter Christ in a personally profound way such that we can say together with St. Paul, "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20) An encounter with Jesus affects how we live day-in and day-out, in thought, word, and deed.

In today's second reading, St. Paul urges the Christians of Corinth to make radical changes in their lives before it is too late. "Time is running out," he warns them. And so it is for all of us. The first reading, from the Book of Jonah, carries a similar sense of urgency. God sends Jonah to turn the inhabitants of the enormous city of Nineveh from their evil deeds. Despite the seemingly impossible task, the prophet sets out on this divine mission. And when he has gone through only one-third of the city, the Ninevites—all of them—believe in God, proclaim a fast, and put on sackcloth.

From these two Scripture readings, we might conclude that fasting, sackcloth, and radical change in our behavior are the primary currency to gain God's favor. Such a conclusion would be misguided. God already loves us as a Father, and Christ has already paid the price for our salvation. Repentance and works of mercy, rather, are acts that flow inevitably out of the encounter and a close relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. Such an encounter changes our lives and enables us to give our lives in service of our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

One of the most effective ways to change the lives of others in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati is through the Catholic Ministries Appeal. The theme of this year's CMA campaign comes from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. John: "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you" (Jn 20:21). The ministries supported by this annual appeal enable us, who are sent by Christ, to do together in Christ's name what we cannot do alone.

The six ministries funded by the Catholic Ministries Appeal assist some of the most vulnerable among us every day; including the hungry, the elderly, those with mental health challenges, and

prisoners. The Catholic Ministries Appeal supports: Catholic Charities of Southwest Ohio; Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley; hospital, campus, and prison chaplaincies; the Center for New Evangelization; St. Rita School for the Deaf; Mount St. Mary's Seminary & School of Theology; and our retired priests and senior clergy. Collectively, their outreach is wide and deep, and their impact is profound—from the hundreds of thousands of meals served each year through Catholic Charities and Catholic Social Ministries, to the life-changing education provided by St. Rita School for the Deaf.

As a result of our prison ministry, we welcomed six men and one woman into the Catholic Church this past year; and our very active hospital chaplains, in their outreach, made more than 40,000 visits to patients and families throughout the Archdiocese during the past year.

If you have a son, a daughter, a grandchild, a friend, or a neighbor at the University of Cincinnati, Wright State University, or Miami University, they may be among the more than one thousand students involved in CMA-supported campus ministry programming that helps students live their faith at a challenging time in their lives.

Your parish may be served, now or at some time in the future, by one of the seven men ordained to the priesthood this past spring, or one of the fourteen men ordained to the permanent diaconate. This year, more than fifty seminarians are studying for service in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, while many of the more than one hundred priests who are retired or on senior clergy status, continue their lifetime of service as they are able.

If you or someone you know received marriage preparation from the one-day Genesis pre-Cana retreat for engaged couples—as 750 couples did this past year—that was made possible by the Center for the New Evangelization. The Center also forms, equips, and coaches parish catechists and evangelists, while sponsoring events such as the annual Exult adoration event and Totus Tuus, a parish-based summer catechetical program for young people.

When we support the Catholic Ministries Appeal together, we help to make all these good things happen:

- We express in a concrete way our gratitude to God, the Source of all the gifts in our lives.
- We join together as the Body of Christ in our local Church.
- We collaborate in the corporal works of mercy.
- Everyone in our Archdiocese can see the good works of the CMA and give glory to God, as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:16)

Last year's CMA campaign was the most successful ever. To all of you who partnered in supporting these ministries, I am deeply grateful. I thank you on behalf of the thousands of individuals who have benefitted—some of whom you know—and I invite your continued support. If you have not donated to the CMA in the past, I invite you to learn more and prayerfully consider joining thousands of others in supporting these worthy ministries.

Ultimately, this is an invitation to you to make an act of trust in God. By contributing financially to these ministries, you are showing God that you are grateful for the gifts you have, and that you trust Him to continue to provide for you. God's generosity cannot be outdone.

In the name of God's people directly or indirectly served by these ministries, I thank you for your generosity.