

## THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 24, 2021 B

**Facilitator:** *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

**Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.**

**Opening prayer:** *God, our loving Father, we gather in your name to share your holy Word. May your Spirit break open for us the true meaning of the Word we share. May your Spirit bind us together so that we may become a praying and loving small Church family. Above all, help us to become doers of your Word. We make our prayer through your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

**Response to last week is Word:** [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** In the First Reading, the preaching of Jonah meets with immediate response in the pagan city of Nineveh. The Gospel is also a call to repentance. Convinced that the Second Coming of Jesus is imminent, Paul calls his readers to live in a spirit of detachment from the world.

*Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.*

Read the First Reading, the Psalm, and the Second Reading, pausing briefly after each one.

### FIRST READING: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The purpose of the book of Jonah, written after the Israelites have returned from exile, is to teach the people that God loves all people, even Israel's greatest enemies.

A reluctant Jonah travels to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which devastated the Kingdom of Judah and Israel, destroying the latter completely in 722 B.C. To Jonah's great surprise, the Ninevites—from the King down to the lowest person—respond immediately to Jonah's call to repentance. Such reaction from an evil people to Jonah's preaching is an example of the *transformative* power of the Word of God.

The final verse of today's reading which says, "*God repented of the evil he had threatened to carry out,*" is an example of anthropomorphic language. The author speaks of God as if he were a human being.

For this Sunday's Mass, the Jonah reading is used to teach the kind of repentance that Jesus is calling people to as he begins his public ministry.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM 25

This psalm stresses the rightness of God's way, which, if followed, leads us to life.

### SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 7:29-31

There is a sense of urgency in this reading as there is in the First and Third Readings. Paul believes Jesus' Second Coming is imminent so he sets out to show his readers how to live in a world that is transitory. In light of the fact that the world will soon be coming to an end, it is foolish to treat as permanent that which is transitory. Paul is not suggesting that people sit around and do nothing but that their primary focus should be on "higher things" – that they should use their time to conform their lives to Christ.

### PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

*As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.*

**A participant reads the Gospel,  
then all pause to reflect.**

*As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.*

## **GOSPEL: Mark 1:14-20**

In the Gospel, the mention of John the Baptist's arrest signals that the reign of God would not be established without sacrifice and that following Jesus could be dangerous. Jesus begins his preaching with a call to repentance. The call to repentance connects his preaching with that of John the Baptist's. If the Ninevites responded so fully to the preaching of Jonah, how much more should we respond to Jesus?

The Gospel goes on to relate the call of four apostles: two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John. We notice their immediate response to Jesus just like the Ninevites' immediate response to Jonah.

Discipleship leads to mission: "*Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.*" These men are called to *become disciples and make disciples*. So it is with us: we are called to radical conversion to Christ and called to lead others to Christ.

## **FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS**

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.
2. In the First Reading and Gospel, there is a call to repentance. What does the word 'repentance' mean to you? During this Covid time, might repentance mean anything a bit different than pre-Covid time?
3. Our Church tells us that conversion is an *ongoing and daily* challenge. At this time, can you name an area of your life where conversion may be needed?
4. Can you recall the first time you had an experiential sense of God's call? If so, what was that experience like for you?
5. In the Gospels, Peter, Andrew, James and John were not only called to follow Jesus, they were also called to be *missionary disciples* of Jesus. To what extent do you have a missionary sense in even small ways, like telling others about a good religious book you are reading. To what extent do you have "fire in your belly" for leading others to Christ?
6. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

## **JOURNALING**

*Having listened to God's Word and listened to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

## **PRAYING WITH THE WORD**

**Facilitator:** Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, you call me to be one of your missionary disciples, but often I am a bit fearful of reaching out to others. Bless me with the gift of courage.*

## **RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Let us be aware of the small conversions Jesus may be calling us to this week. Pray for the grace to *notice* God's call.

## **CONCLUDING PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

**Facilitator:** What are we grateful for? For whom and for what do we need to pray?

## **CLOSING PRAYER (Together)**

*Merciful God,  
You call us to daily conversion  
to your ways of seeing and doing things.  
Help us to notice your call.  
Help us to overcome any resistance  
we may have to your call.  
Help us also to overcome any fear  
we may have of sharing  
our faith with others.  
This we pray through Christ Our Lord.  
Amen.*