

Christ Our Hope Catholic Church
Faith in Laity Corner



3rd Sunday Ordinary Times
Monday, January 22, 2018

Year 2/Cycle B
Jon. 3:1-5, 10; Mk 1:14-20

Within The Whale

Welcome to the 3rd week of Ordinary times as one can observe the machinery of US government grinding slowly to a halt, we can only think ...'What's next?' This week's Biblical text, we have the famous reading and story surrounding Jonah brought to life. Most of us connect Jonah as the 'guy' who ran from God and a whale caught and swallowed him up. Yet, there is more to it than that!! What was the issue? Jonah did not want to obey God's command, the task that God had placed before Jonah, had no glamor and was open to ridicule, speculation and even arrest. Jonah was asked to go out to give *bad news* to a non-Jewish community,

*Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce
to it the message that I will tell you. (Jon. 3:2)*

It is dangerous to be the bearer of '*bad news*' to your own people, but to have to bring "bad news" to in a foreign country was not a good idea! Just think today, if we had bad new like what Jonah brought.... The Office of Homeland Security would have had us arrested, our family and friends would be brought in for questioning, our email and Facebook page would be taken down, our classmates and neighbors would be interviewed and it goes on.

*'Jonah began his journey through the city, announcing,
"Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown,"' (Jon. 3:6)*

We can imagine the panic of Homeland Security and the entire country when a statement like is made. But this was not how the Assyrian city of Nineveh took it. Yes, Jonah was in a foreign country, but he was acknowledged as a man anointed by God, and his words held weight when pronounced. The city

was not just any simple place, but one of prestige.

*“Now Nineveh was an awesomely great city;
it took three days to walk through it.” (Jon. 3:3)*

The next statement was critical, to understand why the citizens of such a prestigious city would react in this manner.

“The people of Nineveh believed God;” (Jon. 3:5)

Not only did the people of that land believed in God, but importantly, their leader was humble enough to realize that his power was under a higher authority – God’s.

*“The king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne,
laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth,
and sat in ashes.” (Jon. 3:6)*

There is, without doubt, an example of leadership demonstrated by the king of Nineveh. Yes, if the king had objected or remained uninvolved the resolve of people would have been weakened.

The king, humbled himself, understanding the importance of this warning to the life of his nation and that the mercy of God was needed,

“When he had proclaimed throughout Nineveh:” (Jon. 3:6)

The king demanded that his subjects follow him to wear sackcloth and sit in ashes.

*“Man and beast alike must be covered
with sackcloth and call loudly to God;..” (Jon.3:8)*

In the United States we too, have a whale that exists around us, we have the illustration of true leadership in the ancient Assyrian King of that time, who led by example. At no time did he claim to be a God-fearing man, or always righteous towards his people, but his actions clearly showed that the king was taking great lengths to observe that the warning given was taken seriously; and that he was not removing himself from guilt.

*“By decree of the king and his nobles, no man or beast,
no cattle or sheep, shall taste anything;
they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water.” (Jon. 3:7)*

True leadership does not mean that we exempt ourselves from the plight of the people, but moreover that leaders need to identify with the need of all and be about clear demonstration of how much they want God to spare their land and their people. If a pagan king and his people, long before the time of Christ, demanded that they prove themselves aligning to the Will of God, what should we be doing now in the 21st century? In this week’s Gospel Jesus selected some of His Apostles, whom He taught through action what it is like to place the Will of His Father above all else. Therefore, it is on us

to elect and stand up for leadership which clearly demonstrates the teaching of Christ in the way laws and public policies are enforced, so as to uplift the dignity of others and not measure the potential of another human by their country of origin. If Jonah brought an unpleasant message to a foreign king; should we not bring the real issues to our leadership or are we going to remain hiding in the belly of a national whale?

*May we remember to pray for our two active parishioners,
Mr. William Turner and Carolyn Tait who were called home this week;
may God grant them His eternal rest and peace.*

Faith in Laity Corner is a weekly review of Sunday's readings written by

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