3rd Sunday In Ordinary Time Year C

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Our present selection is actually taken from the SECOND time that the word of the Lord came to Jonah. The first time Jonah ran away and God had to send a whale to haul him back! Who could blame Jonah for refusing to go to a powerful enemy and threaten them with divine retribution if they didn't repent? Jonah hated the Ninevites and didn't want to see them repent and be forgiven and blessed by God. Jonah was as scandalized by God's mercy as people today are scandalized by God's justice. God has a plan for the Assyrians which Jonah recognizes but doesn't want to cooperate with—the Assyrians are to punish Israel for its unfaithfulness, and Jonah is asked to help.

1. The word of the Lord to Jonah, saying:
2. "Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you." Nineveh was a giant city, the royal residence of Assyria. The people were Gentiles and enemies of the Israelites. Their trade route to Egypt ran right through Israel and they regularly swept down in search of conquest. Nineveh had a reputation as the greatest and most wicked city in the world. It had brutally and tyrannically held the civilized world in terror for three hundred years.
3. So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh, according to the Lord's bidding. The close call with the whale moved Jonah's feet, but not his heart. He does the Lord's bidding, but not with much enthusiasm. Jonah undergoes no change of heart but merely complies because he has found escape impossible. Now Nineveh was an enormously large city; it took three days to go through it.
4. Jonah began his journey through the city, and had gone but a single day's walk announcing, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed," Jonah is a prophet and yet the only prophecy he utters is the threatened destruction of Nineveh within forty days, which was not fulfilled. Yet this book, hardly more than a parable in length, is referred to 2 times by our Lord Jesus Christ!
5. when the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth. What a preacher! Only one-third of the way into his mission and the people responded fully to his call to conversion! This is the real miracle in the story of Jonah. The three days in the belly of the fish catches our attention, but the conversion of the most wicked city in the world in one day is a truly miraculous event! The physical miracle gets its importance in that it points to the greater, spiritual miracle. The Ninevites stand in striking contrast to Israel, who remained obstinate despite all the prophetic preaching they received. Let us be reminded here that the Church encourages us to fast as a form of penance even though it is only required on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday for those between the ages of 21 and 60. Since we are no longer required to go without meat on Fridays, we can now CHOOSE OUR PENANCE every Friday of the year in memory of the death of the Lord. The Catechism says that lent and EACH FRIDAY are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, and voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving as well as charitable and missionary works. In Pope Paul VI's constitution "Paenitemini, 1966" it states specifically that every Friday calls for some act of penance when abstinence from meat is not observed. The Catechism (2043) explains that fasting and abstinence help us acquire mastery over our instincts and give us freedom of heart. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days in preparation for his public ministry. (Matthew 4:2)

10. When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out. This story teaches three lessons: that you can't run away from God as Jonah tried to do, that even wicked people like the Ninevites can repent, and that God's mercy is for Gentiles (the Ninevites) as well as the Jews. Nineveh has repented and God has spared them—Israel did not repent and God later used Assyria to punish them.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

TIME IS RUNNING OUT and our future is determined by what we do now!…This reading is centered on Paul's conviction, and that of the early Christians, that Christ's second coming was imminent. Paul also reminds us that this world is not the ultimate reality. We are created for the world to come and we must live in this world in a way that enables us to keep our attention focused on Christ.

29. I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out. Paul could be speaking to *us* for the Lord may come at any moment and we must live in prayer and watchfulness awaiting his return…With the Lord's resurrection and Pentecost the last days of salvation history have begun, and time is pressing on to the consummation of redemption. Paul goes on to say that the Christian should live as the Lord admonished him; in prayer and watchfulness awaiting the return of his Lord. This world is not our ultimate reality as we are created for the world to come. Brief indeed is our time for loving, for giving, for making atonement. It would be very wrong, therefore, for us to waste it, or to cast this treasure irresponsibly overboard. We must not squander this period of the world's history which God has entrusted to each one of us! From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, The Christian must be detached from the world that is passing away. Even the married must fulfill their duties without having their hearts attached to the world. The fact is that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away.
30. those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, The point that Paul is making in this section is that the ways of the world are different from the ways of God and we should not be deceived, but should live the life of God rather than the life of the world.
31. those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away. While Paul seems to be referring to an imminent return of the Lord at his Second Coming, he may also have been referring to the passing of the old world that was ordered by the Law of Sinai, and the coming of a new world ordered by the New Law in Christ which was taking over. After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Christian center was definitely in Rome. The Lord's Resurrection and Pentecost ushered in the last days of salvation history and we are absolutely closer to the return of the Lord every day of our lives!

Mark 1:14-20

14. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: The arrest of John was a pivotal event turning the focus of Jesus' ministry to Galilee. Prior to this, Jesus had an earlier ministry in Judea that overlapped with John's. John 3:26 tells how John the Baptist's disciples went to him and said, "Rabbi, the man who

was with you across the Jordan—the one about whom you have been testifying—is baptizing now, and everyone is flocking to him." The expression, "The gospel of God", is used by St. Paul (Rom. 1:1; 2Cor 11:7) where it means the same as "the gospel of Jesus Christ", thereby implying the divinity of Jesus Christ.

15. "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. All that the prophets had to say about the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of God's sovereignty has come true in the person of Jesus. This is so important and the fruit of the meditation is so rich that "The Proclamation of the Kingdom" is the third luminous mystery of the rosary. Repent, This call to repent literally means a "change of mind" or "change of heart." The word is used 22 times in the New Testament for a conversion of one's entire life to the Lord. It involves a twofold movement of the heart: turning away from sin and turning toward God. This entails genuine contrition for past failings and a firm resolve to avoid them in the future. Repentance is shown by baptism, confession of sins, and the production of fruits worthy of repentance. It involves good works, alms given to the poor and the faithful execution of one's duty. While this call to conversion is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel, the Catechism also speaks of the SECOND CONVERSION which applies to ALL of us who are at once holy and yet, always in need of purification, which calls us to follow constantly the path of penance and renewal. St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance." This life-long process is sustained by the Eucharist, in which there are many facets that speak of conversion and sin forgiveness such as the exchanging of the sign of peace, the petition for sin-forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, the words of the institution over the cup, speaking of the Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and the words of the priest after the gospel has been proclaimed, that by this proclamation our sins may be blotted out. Recalling and renewing our commitment to conversion and repentance is a major theme of the Eucharist. and believe in the gospel."

16. As he passed by "As he passed by" would suggest a casual encounter but whenever this phrase is used about Jesus in the Gospels, it refers to the appearance or manifestation of his divine nature. Here it shows forth Jesus' Messianic power to create disciples. the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon Wherever the Apostles are enumerated in the Gospels, St. Peter is invariably named first, just as here he is the first on the list of disciples to be called. Peter's name appears 195 times in the Gospels and the Acts. Next in prominence is St. John with 29 references to his name. and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. At this time Simon was probably in his early thirties and he lived with his wife and her family in the town of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was the proprietor of a boat and, along with his younger brother Andrew, worked in partnership with another boat owner, Zebedee, whose sons James and John were Peter's age and his close friends. Galilean fishermen had the reputation of being the most pious of Jews.

17. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Note that Jesus came to them while they were doing their normal, daily work.

18. Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. It was widely known in the early Church that Mark not only translated for Peter while in Rome, but he is also supposed to have written Peter's memoirs, which many think is the Gospel of Mark. Ancient writers called the book of Mark "Peter's Gospel" because he got his information about Jesus from Peter.

19. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. The writer of this gospel combines incidents so as to make the three privileged disciples the first to be called. Keep in mind that Salome, the mother of James and John was thought to be the sister or half-sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. Christ chooses men of modest education to demonstrate to the world that the wisdom of the gospel stems directly from God and not the ingenuity of man.

20. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him. It is clear from the Gospel narrative that these Apostles had found Jesus earlier but were able to return occasionally to their own work. However, today they seem to have a definite summons to be permanently attached disciples. Peter and Andrew answered Jesus' call by leaving behind their livelihood (their nets) whereas James and John responded by severing family ties. Mark's primary purpose is to show that discipleship entails renunciation of the security of possessions and family ties.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray, (2) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Martin Connell, (3) "You Can Understand The Bible" by Peter Kreeft, (4) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (5) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (6) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Lawrence E. Mick, (7) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (8) "The Sunday Epistles And Gospels" by Monsignor Patrick Boylan, (9) "The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary" by C. Bernard Ruffin, (10) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S. J., (11) "Jesus, Peter & The Keys" by Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren, and Rev. Mr. David Hess, (12) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (13) "Notes On The Minor Prophets" by H. A. Ironside, Litt.D., (14) "workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (15) "workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers: 1991" by Graziano Marcheschi with Nancy Seitz Marcheschi, (16) The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology Online Founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, (17) "workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2009" by Mary A. Ehle, (18) "The Navarre Bible: ST MARK", (19) "A Celebrants Guide to the New Sacramentary: B Cycle" by Kevin W. Irwin, and (20) "The New Rosary In Scripture" by Edward Sri.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.