

January 23, 2021



Dear Parishioners,

The readings this weekend are very focused. Those of us who are old enough to have grown up on children's Bible stories might remember the story of Jonah and the whale. That's the Jonah spoken of in the first reading who was called by God to preach repentance to the Ninevites with whom God was angry because of their wickedness. But the Israelites were long-standing enemies of the Ninevites, so Jonah didn't want them to be saved from God's wrath. ("God's wrath" is the topic for another reflection.) So he runs away from God on a ship, causes a storm to almost kill everyone, gets tossed overboard, is swallowed by a whale, thrown up on the shore, then finally goes to Nineveh and begins to do what God asked him. They repent immediately and he's angry with God for forgiving them. God's response is fascinating. Read Jonah chapters 3 and 4 in the Old Testament section of your bible or go to usccb.org, our national Catholic Bishops' website, and click on Jan. 24 on the calendar you'll find there.

The gospel is the call of two sets of brothers by Jesus, but I'd like to have us reflect on the Jonah passage. It's a parable which means it's a story with a message, not something which actually happened. It occurs to me that it might contain some lessons for us today. Have we ever been so upset with someone that we actually wished them ill? Is there anyone among our relationships whom we feel is beyond being touched by God's love and mercy? If we've noticed the people whom Jesus calls to follow him and forgives, they include saintly types and sinners: think of the tax collector, Matthew, who regularly cheated his fellow Jews before Jesus called him; and Barabbas, the insurrectionist and murderer, crucified with Jesus to whom He promises paradise. Is there some public figure (whose private demons we're unaware of, of course) to whom we'd like to see something awful happen? Do we need to recall our own faults, even if they are small, instead of even mentally judging someone else's virtue or lack thereof? Is part of our own call to broaden our vision and pray for anyone we feel is beyond God's mercy? This is the call I hear from Jonah's story.

Peace to you and yours! Sr. Sheral

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others." African proverb