

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 27th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM Mass - October 8, 2019**

**Jonah 3: 1-10** "The people of Nineveh believed God, turned from evil ways, and God changed his mind."

**Psalm 130: 1-8** "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand?"

**Luke 10: 38-42** "Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened. Martha was distracted by many things."

### **Believe in God and Listen To Him**

#### **Introduction**

It is popular amongst some biblical scholars today, to view certain people and events in the Bible as allegories, which are made up stories, told to make a certain point, like Aesop's Fables. This would include the book of Job, the Adam and Eve creation account, and this one from today, about Jonah, the whale, and the City of Nineveh. I take the traditional Catholic view that these events are historical. They have symbolic truth and meaning, of course, but they are also a part of our 'salvation history', the great story that God has spoken by His Word. This Word we have come to know as The Messiah, the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is not a symbol, but who IS truth itself.

#### **Jonah**

The story of Jonah is part of the story of God's people. Jewish scholars regarded it so. The early Church Fathers never questioned it. The Roman-Jewish historian, Josephus, recorded it as fact, and Jesus himself referred directly to the 'sign of Jonah', speaking of the three days he would spend in the tomb. Finally, we have the testimony of God to Jonah himself. It says that The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: "Get up, go to Nineveh and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."

Nothing about this speaks of fiction or a mere symbol. Jonah was called by God to go to an Assyrian city that took three days to walk across. It's wickedness was legendary in ancient times. But that's the place to which God sent Jonah to walk

into the middle of the people there and shout out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," which means destroyed, for its sinful ways.

If today's psalmist was a citizen of that city, he would have pointed out to them that there was no way in the world that they could save themselves from their destruction. He would ask them to pray, "If you, O Lord, laid bare our guilt, who could endure it? If you should mark our iniquities, who could stand?" In our time, we can still say the same. If our God was the God who counts the number of our sins, we would never get out from under them. We would be buried forever.

But in that city where everything BUT the one true God was worshipped, "the people believed God." There is the key for us. They fasted and put on sackcloth. Their king led them in humility before God. Their salvation came through a total conversion, from the commonest of people to the king himself. WOW! That is some conversion.

## **Luke**

Conversion of heart is still the key. And, although it is an entirely different event, Martha is called on by the Word of the Lord, Jesus himself, to experience a full conversion. Like Nineveh, our world has much wickedness of its own, from which it needs saving. But, we can probably relate more to Martha than the people of Nineveh.

Martha is part of the way there already. This is indicated by Luke in the passage by the fact that she welcomed the Lord into her home. Yet there is a distance between she and Jesus that still needs to be overcome if she is to be of one heart with Jesus like her sister, Mary.

Martha's desire to serve was good, but she let her work for the Lord distract her from the Lord himself. I remember a priest who was so busy, his prayer life suffered. He finally admitted to himself and to God that he had let his work take the place of his prayer. When we do this, sooner or later, we are likely to feel lost and uncared for and to say with Martha, "Lord, do you not care about me?" and Jesus will say to us, "You are worried and distracted by many things, but Mary has chosen the better part."

## **Call to Action**

We say the words of the Our Father, which he taught his disciples. We might not notice it as much but the priest says a prayer at the end of the Our Father worth our attention: "Deliver us Lord we pray from every evil. Graciously grant peace in our days. That by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our saviour, Jesus Christ." The old translation was "safe from all anxiety." That word does not just mean the things we worry about. It is a kind of separation from God.

Jonah was a sign to a sinful people. Jesus is THE sign of God's presence which would be the means by which sin itself would be overcome. Jonah was the means by which Nineveh was saved. Jesus is the source of the salvation of the whole world. The Word of the Lord came to Jonah. That Word, the Lord in the flesh, came directly to Martha, and now comes to us in several ways here at mass.

Today, let us, like the king of Nineveh, like Mary at Jesus' feet, humble ourselves and ask him to free us from our anxieties and our sins, so that we may enter into communion with the Lord of life, who is the truth we seek.