



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
January 24, 2021

God's Patient Call

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The Sistine Chapel fresco, *The Prophet Jonah*, is directly above *The Last Judgment*. Michelangelo chooses to depict Jonah for his theological connection to Jesus, who said, "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matthew 18:40).

Unlike Jesus, Jonah initially balks at God's call until he grudgingly accepts and preaches to the city of Nineveh. In his rebellion, he gets in a boat and goes the opposite direction from where God was calling. Eventually he was thrown

overboard and swallowed by the fish, seen painted at his side. After a three-night stomachache, the fish spewed Jonah up on the shore, back where he had started.

Jonah looks up to heaven with a weary longing, which might denote his melancholy personality. The fig tree further reinforces his weakness because it recalls the episode when Jonah lay under the fig tree in depression and lethargy.

Like Peter and Andrew, James and John, God entered Jonah's life and called him. Unlike the apostles, it took him a while to say yes. We can also be slow to respond to the invitation of God in our soul, whether in big or small things. Perhaps the attraction of the world or fear of sacrifice keeps us from saying yes. Yet his voice is constant and persistent.

Michelangelo paints Jonah dangling above *The Last Judgment* as if to subtly say, you are cordially invited to say yes to God's patient callings...while you still have time. +

Sunday Readings

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

I tell you, brothers, the time is running out....For the world in its present form is passing away.

Mark 1:14-20

Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

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to the invitation of God
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or small things.***

A Word from Pope Francis

In these, our troubled times, rent by the tragedies of war and menaced by the baneful tendency to accentuate differences and to incite conflict, may the Good News that in Jesus forgiveness triumphs over sin, life defeats death, and love conquers fear, be proclaimed to the world with renewed fervor.

—Letter recognizing missionary work,
October 22, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What has God been calling me to do?
- Do I understand that putting off his voice is also putting off God's joy and goodness?

Being Authentic to God

By Kathleen M. Basi

I have a theory about nurturing faith in the family. It goes like this: If a child's faith is an integral part of his or her everyday life—not just the overtly religious parts—it will become so central to that person's identity that he or she could never leave the Church because it would mean an abandoning of self. The question is, how do you accomplish that goal?

I believe the answer is twofold: authenticity and practicality.

First Corinthians 12 exhorts us to remember that our gifts are uniquely given by God and so is our calling. In my family, nurturing the faith in an authentic and practical way means leading a choir at Mass and teaching natural family planning with the kids sitting in the room with us. It means letting them watch the news and having no-question-off-limits discussions of what they see there. It means carrying snacks in the car to give to homeless men and women, digging into piggy banks to contribute to the family's Christmas charity, and regarding conservation and recycling as signs of Godly stewardship, not just civic responsibility.

In your family, an authentic, practical application of the faith might look quite different. It's not about doing what everyone else does. It's about being authentic to the gifts residing within individual households. It's about applying the faith to every moment of every day.



This isn't just for the kids, either. Adults cannot nurture in our children what we do not possess ourselves. Conversion is a lifelong process. When Pope Francis visited the United States, for instance, he challenged Catholics as well as nonbelievers. Did we listen? Did we revisit dearly held opinions in light of our identity as Catholic Christians?

Our children need to see us engaged in an authentic search for God, one that doesn't profess to have all the answers but instead constantly seeks his will over our own limited understanding of the world. They need to see us wrestling with concepts like forgiveness and "do unto others" in the mundane interactions that

make up the vast majority of life.

In this, they mirror the adult world. The Church suffers when its members pass judgment on others while failing to recognize the ways in which our worldly biases lead us away from the Gospel. The good news is that an authentic and practical application of the faith is the key not only to the next generation of the Church but also to evangelizing the world. +

Our children need to see us engaged in a genuine search for God.

**PRAYER**

Lord, you call me to do the work of God in the world. Help me to say yes to your work of peace and reconciliation.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 25–30

Monday, Conversion of St. Paul:
Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 / Mk 16:15–18

Tuesday, Sts. Timothy and Titus:
2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 3:31–35

Wednesday, Weekday:
Heb 10:11–18 / Mk 4:1–20

Thursday, St. Thomas Aquinas:
Heb 10:19–25 / Mk 4:21–25

Friday, Weekday:
Heb 10:32–39 / Mk 4:26–34

Saturday, Weekday:
Heb 11:1–2, 8–19 / Mk 4:35–41

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