



**Blessed Sacrament Parish**  
**Homily by Deacon Terry Ellerman**  
**January 21, 2018 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Reading I** Jonah 3:1-5, 10

**Psalm** 25:4-9

**Reading II** 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

**Gospel** Mark 1:14-20

**Homily**

This morning we celebrate the third Sunday in ordinary time and our readings talk to us about the call, the call that we have as well, and the urgency of responding to that call and the importance of having trust in God so that we can respond. We look at our first reading from Jonah. We need to remember that this was not the first time God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh. The first time God went to Jonah he said, "I want you to be a prophet and I want you to go to Nineveh and tell them they need to repent." And Jonah said, "I'm not going to do that. I don't even like the people of Nineveh, they killed the Israelites, I do not like them." So, what did Jonah do? He got on a boat and went in the opposite direction. He did not respond to the call.

When he was on the boat, what happened? He was on this ship and a storm came up and it was wild and horrible and the boat was about to sink. The captain said, "There must be someone on board who has done something wrong. There is someone bad here." So, they cast straws and went to find Jonah. Jonah was sleeping. The men said, "We have a problem here. We are going to die. Have you done something against God. Or does God have something against you?"

Jonah said, "Well, I didn't listen to God when he told me to do something."

The men asked, "What are we going to do?"

Jonah said, "If you throw me overboard, probably things will be OK."

So, guess what? They threw him overboard, and as we know he was then swallowed by a whale. He was in the belly of the whale for how long? Three days. Jonah had a long time to think about that call that God had given to him about going to Nineveh. Finally after three days he was spit out on shore and God asked him, "Would you like to go to Nineveh?" And Jonah said, "I'd love to go to Nineveh." Not exactly, but he did go to Nineveh and told the people there, "Repent of your sins and if you don't, in 40 days you are going to be destroyed."

Now in the back of Jonah's mind, and this was not a very good thing, he was hoping they would not repent so they would be destroyed. But they listened to him and they changed and because of that — they were spared.

Then in our second reading we hear about Paul. We know about Paul's conversion. Paul was a persecutor of Christians. And one day he was knocked off his horse and God spoke to him and said, "What are you doing to my people? You're killing them!" And what do we see but a conversion. A change of heart. Paul then responds to God's call.

Then in the Gospel of Mark today, we see Jesus going out to sea and when he comes back, he calls Andrew and Peter, James and John and says, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." We don't have a whole lot of background in that — did the four of them know much about Jesus. They obviously must have know something because how many of us, if someone came to you and said, "Come. Follow me." How many of us would ask: How long is it going to be? How much will we get paid? Is there vacation time?" But they didn't. They just followed him.

It takes trust to be able to do that. An there was urgency in all three readings. Jonah said, "In 40 days Nineveh shall be destroyed." And Paul said, "Time is running out, and the world in its present form is passing away." Then Jesus says in the Gospel, "This is the time of fulfillment, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel."

Each and every one of us is called. None of us has been in the belly of a whale. None of us has been knocked off a horse. None of us has had the experience of Jesus walking by and saying, "Leave. Come follow me." Nonetheless, he calls each and every one of us to spread the good news to other people. It is through our baptism that we are priest, prophet and king. It is through our baptism that we are called to spread the good news, not only by what we just say, but also how we live our lives.

The question really becomes, do we hear that? Do we know that we are called, and then do we respond to that call? No one knows if we are going to die tomorrow, or in a year, or in a hundred years from now. But we are going to die whether it happens at the end of the world, or we face our own death sometime soon. The question really is: Have we responded to God's call in the way he wants us to? Which means we need to spend some time thinking about that — what has God called me to do?

How many of you here have made a TEC? How many of you have made a Cursillo? Those are times like being in the belly of the whale. Those are times when we set time aside to do only one thing, and that is to think about our relationship with God and each other, and how we are living out the call that we all have been given. If you have not made a Cursillo, you need to do it. If you are a younger person, you need to make a TEC or go to TEC as an observer. It is an opportunity for us to do that. How many of you have made a retreat. Again, it is the same thing? Taking time out of our life to listen to God and the call that he has given us. Not that we are praying all the time, but there are so

many things going on in our world that we do not always have the opportunity to pray, and if we don't — we fail.

We missed the mark of what we need to do. Jesus says we need to trust. After communion, the second graders are going to sing a Vacation Bible School song from a couple of years ago. It is called "Fly." And the words go:

Up, up, and away we go,  
Into the great beyond.  
Wherever we go, and whatever we do,  
We're trusting God along ...  
We will fly,  
We will soar,  
Nothing is impossible.  
We will rise,  
Through the storm,  
Trusting God and leaving our fears behind.  
We will fly,  
Anything is possible,  
Everything is possible with God.

We all have a vocation in life, a calling in life to spread the good news whether it be the vocation of being a priest, like Father Chris Comerford, who dedicates his life 24/7 to leading us to Christ. Or our religious priests and sisters to dedicate their lives to Christ. Or to the vocation of the marriage and spreading the good news to the children around you. Or to the single life where you are doing the same.

We all have been called, but are we responding? Are we using the gifts that God has given us to make a difference in this world? And the answer is "yes" but we could probably do more. So your homework assignment is: Before you go to bed, think about that. You have been called. Do you know what God wants of you? Do you know the gifts and talents that he has given you? And are you using those gifts to bring about the Kingdom of God?

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