

Homily: 3rd Sunday: Cycle B: 2024: Jon 3: 1-5, 10; Ps. 25; 1 Corth 7: 29-31; Mk 1: 14-20

“Viewing Earthly Life in Light of Eternity”

1. The 1st reading from Jonah reminds us of something important: ***no one, no matter what sins they may have committed, is beyond God’s reach as long as one is living on earth.*** That is what we pray for when we beseech God to have mercy on us sinners. We do this at every Mass, and with every Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet we pray. Often it is through our pain and suffering borne with Jesus with more or less love that we effect other souls for the goal of salvation in Christ through the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is God’s ark of salvation here on earth. The city of Nineveh represented everything that was evil in the ancient world with its brutality, sexual immorality and persecution of those who didn’t buy into their view of things. The rulers of Nineveh used to kill those who opposed them, and then line the skulls on big posts along the main roads to warn people not to mess with them. It was a similar mentality in Roman times when the Roman leaders would crucify people and line them up, so people would get frightened and follow the program. Not exactly how God does things: He on the other hand is patient with evildoers and gives them plenty of time to repent, hoping that no one will lose their soul forever - but it is a possibility – so never take His mercy for granted, especially the sacramental graces of forgiveness and healing in the Sacrament of Confession. If you ever commit a mortal sin get to Confession ASAP!
2. ***Time is running out*** – so says St. Paul in the 2nd reading this weekend. He is warning us to live in this earthly life with our heart set on the things of eternity - as taught to us by our Catholic faith. As we well know, this is not easy to do. **There are so many distractions in this life,** some of them flowing from things that are important: *spiritual questions, family matters, work, vocational questions, and struggles with our human nature which is capable of great good and heroic things, but also is capable of being very selfish, petty, malicious, vengeful and evil;* and then some of the distractions coming from the vanity of passing things: *our over-focus on entertainment, technology, sports, passing pleasure, money, status and fame.* Again, in proper perspective all those things can be a means to help us serve God and one another (as St. Paul says in Romans 8: ***all things can work together for the good of those who love God***) – but sometimes that doesn’t happen:

they are simply distractions that can stunt us spiritually and even get us to believe this earthly life is all there is, and so: ***eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die.*** Do we believe this is it? Or do **we believe God** has something good prepared for each of us in eternity, beyond our imagining, in terms of peace, joy and perfect love? (see 1 Corth 2:9)

3. ***This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel,*** so Jesus tells us today in the Gospel reading. Our earthly life matters to God – *what we do with our time, how we try to serve Him and others, how much we pray, and try to incorporate all aspects of our Catholic faith into daily life.* The calling of the Apostles today should remind us that God has called each of us from the moment we are conceived in our mother's womb (*remember human life is sacred from the moment of conception – which is why we need to continue to try to change our culture and our laws from supporting a culture of death to a culture of life* – **Monday Jan 22 is a day of prayer and reparation for the sin of abortion**), and then especially after we are baptized into the very life of the Blessed Trinity, to a mission here on earth. Do we know what our mission as a disciple of Christ is? Generally speaking, all of us are called to know God, love God and serve God in this life, so that we can be happy with Him forever in Heaven. Then each of us are called by God to a specific mission that He ordains for us to carry out on earth, for His glory and the salvation of souls. We only discover it – *if we are praying regularly and allowing the Holy Spirit to mold us daily into the life of Christ, to find the vocation the Lord desires for our own path to salvation and to help others get there as well by living in union with God.* This especially applies to those who the Lord is calling to follow Him in the priesthood and religious life. This vocation only makes sense in light of eternity; otherwise it doesn't have any real meaning. **Why become a priest- if Heaven is not real – if Hell is not a possibility – and if Purgatory doesn't exist?!** But we know from our faith that all 3 of those destinations in eternity are real, and so the priest and the religious reminds people not to settle for this earthly life, but to remember that everything we say, think, and do makes a spiritual mark for good or bad in eternity. People who have had near-death experiences, and come back to earthly life, tell us that our life here on earth whether it was 20 or 90 years will flash by in an instant and we then see how everything we did had a spiritual impact. Never forget that! God bless you.✠