

3rd Sunday of the Year

Jon 3:1-5, 10; I Cor 7:29-31; Mk 1: 14-20

From the very beginning God has called human persons for a divine relationship with him and when we do wrong and go astray; he invites us to a spirit of repentance to make us live a life worthy of him. Repentance means to change our way of thinking, change our values, change the mind and heart, change our desires, and more importantly change the direction of life.

There will be a time in the life of every child of God to respond to his invitation to follow Him closely and participate in His mission. This might require a change in our present life into a service dedicated for God. There are several paths one can choose to follow Jesus, be it in the teaching, medical, legal profession or retailing business etc. In the Gospel of today Jesus invites all to repent and to listen to the Good News that he is going to give. He calls the disciples to continue his mission of repentance and the proclamation of the Kingdom.

In the first reading, we have Prophet Jonah who is asked by God to go and preach to the people of Nineveh. Even though Jonah runs away from God in the beginning, he is brought back to preach. People listen to his word and repent from their sin. God listens to their prayer and forgives them. In the second reading Paul asked the Corinthians to remember that life is short and the world as we know it is passing away. He preaches total detachment and to live without being captivated into it.

In today's gospel we see that Jesus is telling, 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, and repent and believe in the Good News'. It was the Good News of truth, of hope, of peace, of Divine promise, of immortality and of salvation. This good news would embrace all of humanity on earth, would enable them to share the eternal happiness with him.

In announcing the good news, Jesus gave two important things each person must do to in order to receive the kingdom of God: repent and believe. When we submit to Christ's rule in our lives and believe the gospel message Jesus gives the grace and power to live a new way of life as citizens of his kingdom. He gives grace to renounce the kingdom of darkness to receive the new light. That is why repentance is the first step. Repentance means to change, to transform our way of thinking, our attitude, disposition, and life choices so that Christ can be the Lord and Master of our heart. If we are only sorry for the consequences of our sins, we will very likely keep repeating the sin which is mastering us. True repentance requires a contrite heart and sorrow for sin and a firm resolution to avoid it in the future.

When Jesus preached the gospel message, he called a small group of people to become his disciples and he gave them a mission – “to catch people for the kingdom of God”. The type of disciples he chose was surprising. In the choice of the first apostles we see a characteristic feature of Jesus' work: he chose very ordinary people. They were ordinary simple fishermen. They were non-professionals, had no wealth or status in society. They were chosen from among the common people who did ordinary things, had no special education, and no social advantages. He chose these individuals, not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power.

The invitation of Jesus continues even now in our today's world. Each one of us has been called by Jesus as he tells us in Prophet Isaiah chapter 43: “I have called you by name, you are mine...you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.” Today we are called to his mission to preach repentance and live out a particular lifestyle like him. We are called to see Christ in each person we encounter and we are called to become people of peace.