

WHEN GOD SENT JONAH TO NINEVEH/ ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI: MONDAY, 4TH OCTOBER 2021, WEEK 27, YEAR I.

JONAH 1:1-2:1,11; RESP: JONAH 2; LUKE 10:25-37

Our First Reading today is from the book of Jonah. It is a very interesting story that we often read and laugh at but what we often forget is that It is not just the story of Jonah but also our story.

God sent Jonah to Nineveh. Jonah didn't want to go and so he decided he wanted to run to Tarshish, which at that time was referred to as the end of the earth.

There were many possible reasons why Jonah didn't want to go to Ninevah.

I. It could have been fear: Jonah was probably afraid that he would be attacked, mocked or even killed in Nineveh.

II. Nineveh wouldn't believe in that ministry: He didn't believe that the Assyrians would listen to him. The Assyrians were known to be wicked (Nahum 3:1-4).

III. The most probable reason is that Jonah hated the Assyrians and there was nothing he would have desired more than seeing God punishing them.

There is divine humour here. God knew what Jonah would not want to do and that was exactly what He asked him to do. He knew where Jonah would not want to go and that was where He sent him.

Three things today.

A. When we relate with God, we can't come to Him with our own terms and conditions. Instead we must come with a surrendered will.

B. Is there something God wants us to do and of which we are afraid? Something we are trying to work out how it will be possible before we respond? Something we think is too difficult and so we are stubbornly refusing to do? Let us learn today from Jonah. It doesn't pay to try and escape from God.

C. Juxtaposing the First Reading and the Gospel, the Lord is teaching us to love like Him, a love that doesn't exclude anyone or treat anyone as an enemy.

Today we celebrate the memorial of one of the most popular saints. I encourage us to read about him.

Francis was the son of a rich merchant who unlike Jonah, listened to God's call. He quit his military career when God asked him to do so in a vision in 1205. He became a beggar in order to take care of the poor and rebuild ruined churches in Assisi. He took care of lepers and he became a minister, even to animals and nature. Together with his brethren, he founded the order of the Franciscans and with St. Clare, he formed the women's wing of the congregation called the order of Poor Clares.

Great was and still is his influence in the Church and in Christianity today. The secret of Francis' greatness was that he surrendered to God and he followed where God led and did what God said without hesitation.

Like St. Francis, let me be attentive to you Lord, to go where you lead and to become what you want and not what I want.