

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time B 2021

One of the most amazing things about our Christian faith is where it starts. Most religions in the world express humankind's search for God. But Christianity is all about God's search for humankind. It all starts with God, not with us.

Our first reading today shows that to us. The people of Nineveh, a metropolis in the ancient Middle East, are living sinful lives: lives that are full of earthly pleasures but empty of meaning and lasting happiness. When people forget about God and set Him aside, they try to find fulfillment and happiness through other things other than God. At first, people experience a sense of pleasure and satisfaction from them; but it only lasts momentarily. And then they find themselves wanting and they look for more and as they gain more, the more they become hungrier, thirstier, and more unsatisfied in life. God understands this human tendency and that is why His heart is moved with pity for us. He sends us first the prophets, in particular the prophet Jonah today, to wake us up and to put us back to the path of God.

And finally, God sends us His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He wants us to experience the true fulfillment of our lives because He loves us deeply. In the Gospel, we see Jesus doing what He has come to do: calling people into a personal relationship with God. We can notice here how he calls his first Apostles by name - Peter, Andrew, James, John... This is also how He is calling us today, by name. God wants each one of us personally. He wants all of us to be with Him. He is the fulfillment of what we are all looking for in our lives.

For this reason, He proclaimed in the Gospel, "This is the time of fulfillment." When Jesus came into the world, it was a turning point in the history of our salvation. He calls every one of us into an everlasting friendship with him. He became human like us in all things but sin to save us. From the very beginning, He has called us personally to experience Him more intimately in our lives.

We can see this clearly in the history of our human salvation. It is said that there are four stages in the history of human salvation. The first stage was the era of creation. During this period, mankind lived in the fullness of communion with God. It was when Adam and Eve lived in paradise and in a perfect friendship with God. This ended with original sin and the subsequent fall from grace: evil entered the world.

Then the second age began, the age of the Promise. God promised Adam and Eve that he would send a Savior to free the human family from the domination of evil. In this second age, God

gradually prepared the world, through the education of his chosen people, Israel, for the arrival of Jesus Christ.

With Jesus, the third age began, the “time of fulfillment,” the fulfillment of the promise of salvation. In this age, the Christian age, God entered time and space in order to rescue us from sin and destruction. He did so at first through the Incarnation, and he continues to do so through the Church. At the end of this third age, Christ will come again, ushering in the fourth and final age, the age of glory, when evil, death, and sorrow will be banished from his Kingdom forever. If we can see things from the perspective of these four stages of history, it will fill us with wisdom and a sense of purpose because things will make sense for us. We are meant to be in communion with God. Despite our sins and shortcomings, God did not give up on us. He believed in us by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us and make us whole. It is only through Christ whom we can experience the fulfillment of our communion with God if we continue to walk on the path He has paved for us.

What is most exciting about the history of our salvation is that Christ is constantly inviting us to take part in it. What happened in today's Gospel passage happens to each one of us throughout our lives. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all living their normal lives, working to keep food on the table. By all external signs, they were no different from any of their contemporaries. But then one day Jesus Christ walked into their lives and called them each by name. Jesus didn't see them as average people, generic fishermen. Jesus saw each one in the revealing light of God's love. He knew that he had created them for an active role in his divine plan to redeem the human race and become his instruments of love and peace in the world.

Today, Jesus is calling us in the same way just like the first Apostles to answer His call of personal relationship with Him. By reminding us of the history of our human salvation, God has motivated us to renew our response to His call in our hearts, to let our friendship with Him truly become the most important thing for us, more important than our plans, pleasures, hopes, and comfort, because all those things are just part of the “world in its present form,” which is just “passing away.” The one that will remain forever is our friendship with God, the fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams. Amen.