

## **Homily Notes for Sunday, Jan 24, 2021, III O.T. B**

Readings: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10; I Cor 7: 29-31; Mark 1: 14-20

**1. Introduction: We are called today to the New Evangelization.** To meet its demands we must be willing to repent and follow God's guidelines for our time. Today it is very clear that there is a new calling to all of us to be about the New Evangelization. Our readings today all point toward this task.

**2. See the Introductory Chapter (#1) in Matthew Kelly's book, *Rediscovering Catholicism*.** On pp. 30-32 he raises a provocative question, "Why Has Christianity Been Rejected?" Or even more pointedly, "Why have Catholics left the Catholic Church? How many times do you and I run into people who "used to be" or who were "brought up Catholic"?"

**3. This disturbing situation must cause us to do an examination of conscience (perhaps also an examination of effectiveness).** To become vibrant and attractive again, at least to sincere people who are seeking God, we do need to examine ourselves and repent, and *then live out our lives with the Holy Spirit, demonstrating the excellence of being Christian* which is what the three readings today emphasize.

**4. Scripture lessons: - The first reading This reading reminds us that repentance and salvation can come even with an unhappy prophet and even with imperfect contrition.** The first reading shows us that we should respond promptly and with joy to God's call for repentance. The Book of Jonah was written in Palestine around the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. after the Babylonian exile. For Jonah and many of the Jewish people, the Ninevites were enemies, terrible people doing terrible things. The story of Jonah was intended to teach them that God had care for other peoples besides themselves. The first two chapters describe how God responded to Jonah's flight from His call and the mission He had assigned the prophet, exposing him to a deadly storm and an excruciating experience in the belly of a whale. At God's second call to preach repentance in Nineveh, Jonah obeyed, reluctantly, and he was disappointed seeing the ready response of that evil city to God's message of repentance and a change of life! Jonah had not even finished the first day of his preaching journey before the people had totally turned around – doing visible penance while asking and hoping for God's love, reconciliation and forgiveness (in contrast to Israel's refusal to repent and reform). Contrary to Jonah's expectations, the pagan peoples of the city "believed in God" and "renounced their evil behavior".

Note that there are **three different motivations** for repentance. The first is because we love God as the supreme good and are sorry for having offended him. This yields "perfect" contrition. Our contrition is imperfect when we are sorry for our sins because they are hateful in themselves (that is they cause us pain or bad consequences) or because we fear God's punishment (Baltimore Catechism ## 399 & 400).

The CCC expresses it this way: "If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages (benefits)... we resemble mercenaries. Finally, if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands... we are in the position of children" (CCC 1828). I would hope that we could get to the position of recognizing and pleasing God in all instances although all three levels of motivation can work to prompt us to repent.

**In the second reading** Part of our task in the "New Evangelization" is proclaiming **the good news about the Church's position on sexuality**. Our culture has been promoting both birth control and abortion for the last forty years as an answer to sexual problems. "Yet we (still) have the highest rates of nonmarital pregnancies and births in our history and continuing high rates of abortion and sexually transmitted diseases – higher than before the government became so activist on birth control. We have a better idea! **The Theology of the Body Evangelization Teams (TOBET)** help us to present the practical wisdom of Jesus and His Church. Saint Paul had to be strict and detailed in his moral teaching to the Christians in Corinth because Corinth was a bawdy seaport with a typical seaport's set of ethics and some very bizarre philosophical ideas. Hence, Paul spent all of chapter 7 on marriage and sexual morality. Following God's guidelines in this area leads to the greatest happiness, health and salvation.

**Today's Gospel** describes how Jesus came to Galilee at the very beginning of his mission and began preaching, challenging people to "**repent and believe in the gospel.**" For Jesus repentance is necessary

both at the beginning of our Christian journey as well as along the way. One of the meanings of “sin” in the Bible is “falling short”. It would appear that we have fallen short in the world if Christianity has been rejected and many people are even leaving its ranks. Matthew Kelly lays a great challenge before us which the last three Popes have recognized and called us to meet. **Believing** in the gospel demanded from the hearers a resolution to take Jesus’ words seriously, to translate them into action and to put trust in Jesus’ authority. Believing demands that we decide if we believe if salvation in Jesus is real. Is there really a God who is a loving, forgiving, caring and merciful Father who wants to liberate us from sin and despair and save us from our sins through His son Jesus? By describing the call of Jesus’ first disciples—Andrew, Peter, James and John, today’s Gospel also emphasizes how we, sinners, are to respond to God’s call with total commitment by abandoning our accustomed style of life.

**We live in a time of great opportunity.** There is a great movement of reanimation in our Church. **Matthew Kelly** represents one part of it. His books are being read everywhere and he is calling us to action.

This is a time for the New Evangelization (especially now, during the fear of COVID). We have three special ways in which we can participate in this new evangelistic outreach; through the Knights of Columbus and through the Catholic University Missionary Outreach called FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students).

**First: the Knights of Columbus:** The January 2012 issue of *Columbus*, the Knights’ monthly magazine is just outstanding! It includes an article, “Catholic Information Service to Launch Series on New Evangelization.” Supreme Knight Karl A Anderson observes, “Pope Benedict XVI has made the new evangelization a priority. He will call a Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization that will take place in October 2012, marking the beginning of a Year of Faith announced by Pope Benedict XVI... If we are going to be the strong right arm of the Church, we need to be at the center of the Year of Faith and the new evangelization,” he said.

Secondly, all of us can participate in the outstanding material prepared by **Monica Ashour and her team at TOBET**. We are cooperating with Deacon Jerry Besze and his wife Mary from the Diocesan Office on Marriage and Family life and with several different parishes in promoting this. There are outstanding materials through this source to evangelize youth and adults to the Catholic Church.

**Thirdly, through the FOCUS missionary movement.** we, at St Mary’s Center at the University, especially have an opportunity to participate directly in this. We are beginning a FOCUS Bible study this semester with our own students being directed by the FOCUS regional staff. The head and founder of FOCUS, Curtis Martin, has been participating at the Vatican in the preliminary discussions concerning this. He was selected as one of two Americans of 15 total, and one of six laypersons, to be appointed as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. He is one of six lay Catholics and one of two Americans named to the 15-member list of consultants tasked with advising the recently formed Vatican council. The Council was formed to promote the “New Evangelization” throughout the Church. For the future of our Parish, I would love to have on staff a former FOCUS missionary to do youth work and evangelization.

**Conclusion: Can we become the supporters of the New Evangelization to overcome the rejection of the Christian message and of the Catholic Church, bringing the fullness of the Gospel to all?**

Life Application:

1. What is the one thing that God wants me to get out of this Mass that will help me become the best-version-of-myself that I can be? What is one thing I need to do or to work on?
2. What do I need to change, going from bad to good, in my life so that I can be more able to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Of what do I need to repent? What good do I need to start doing?
3. How can I help the Church at this time in the New Evangelization?