

3 OT Year B Readings and Commentary

Celebration Summary by Dale J. Sieverding: *Teach me your ways, O Lord.* We are instructed in a way of life by the Church's liturgy. The Psalms for the people of Israel was their 'school of prayer.' For the Christian, it is the texts of the liturgy, Scripture, song and silence that guides the innermost reaches of our heart to follow God. The call of the disciples is the classic moment to focus on the 'risks and rewards' of discipleship and encourage all to 'stand up' and be counted as followers of Christ. Through stumbling and falling, 'toils and snares' we recognize that we have come a long way, but need to progress so much further in the ways of the Kingdom of God. The world as we know it is passing away to be replaced evermore by the vision of peace, love and understanding envisioned by the Christ, expressed in the written Word of God, broken open in homily, ritual and song.

© 2003, OCP. All rights reserved.

First Reading Jonah 3:1-5, 10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jonah

The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying:

"Set out for the great city of Nineveh,
and announce to it the message that I will tell you."

So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,
according to the LORD's bidding.

Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;
it took three days to go through it.

Jonah began his journey through the city,
and had gone but a single day's walk announcing,
"Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,"
when the people of Nineveh believed God;
they proclaimed a fast
and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way,
he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them;
he did not carry it out.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary Jonah 3:1-5, 10 by Deacon Owen Cummings: As related to today's gospel from St. Mark, the theme of the reading from the prophet Jonah is repentance, change of heart, conversion of life. The Book of Jonah is a work of fiction, probably dating after the Exile between the sixth and the second centuries BCE. As a work of fiction, however, its purpose is not

merely to entertain but to instruct. In the post-exilic period there was a strong insular tendency in Israel. The people had become the people of the Book, as it were, as the Old Testament was edited in the direction in which we know it today. There was also an accompanying sense of being ritually pure, racially pure, separate and distinct from the surrounding and doomed pagan nations. The city of Nineveh in the Old Testament is "sin city." It is the place of God's absence, of decadence, of immorality. It is hell on earth, so to speak. It stands in clear distinction with the religious excellence of the Jews. The reluctant prophet Jonah is sent by God to sin city. He doesn't want to go, but when finally he does, he certainly doesn't expect that his preaching will do any good. How could it in such a place? The city takes three days to walk through but Jonah has gone but one day through it, and his message has met with repentance on all sides. Everyone, great and small, believed God through Jonah's preaching and repented. Jonah, as the rest of the book makes clear, resented the prodigality of God's grace, a constant temptation for religious people.

© 2005, OCP. All rights reserved.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9:

(4a) Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your love are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice
and teaches the humble his way.

Commentary Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9 By Tom Conry: Psalm 25 is an acrostic poem. Each line starts with the successive letter of the alphabet. This is a common mnemonic device (memory helper) when poems, songs,

and stories are typically oral as opposed to written down. In this case, the prayer is a liturgical composition expressing trust in God, who "guides the oppressed to justice" (v. 9).

The song adopts the persona of one who is falsely accused. The singer is beset by numerous enemies, and would despair on account of a life of sin (the "sins of my youth" v. 7), but is rescued by a conviction that God will show the sinner the way (v. 8). This idea of "the way" becomes an important part of the Jesus-movement; people who follow Jesus in early Christian communities are said to be following "the way."

The song is fundamentally a plea for a chance at a new way of life. The psalm singer remembers the youthful sins of the past, but is convinced that the history of God's faithfulness and loving kindness throughout history far outweighs any personal guilt. It is this trust that the psalm holds up as a model for all the people of God.

© 2003, OCP. All rights reserved.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.
From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,
those weeping as not weeping,
those rejoicing as not rejoicing,
those buying as not owning,
those using the world as not using it fully.
For the world in its present form is passing away.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 by Virginia Smith: The readings from Paul's letters to the Corinthians began last weekend and will continue until the beginning of Lent. Since there is generally no correlation between the second reading and the connecting themes of the first and third, homilists may find it useful to refer back to last week's reading or ahead to next week's in order to provide the continuity that may be missing. One of the topics discussed in the bishops' synod on Scripture which concluded in October at the Vatican was just such a lack of continuity between some of the weekend readings. Among the suggestions was the use of somewhat longer excerpts which would certainly be helpful especially with readings as short as today's.

It must be remembered that early in Paul's career he, like most Christians, believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. Because it could occur at any moment, Jesus' disciples should live in such a way that the parousia would not take them by surprise. Paul is concerned about peoples' inordinate attachment to this world and would prefer that they live with one foot in this world and the other in the next inasmuch as "...time is running out."

Paul might rebuke modern Christians with being too little concerned about the return of Jesus. Time is running out in the 21st Century every bit as much as it was in the First. Even if Jesus does not return in our lifetime, time will most assuredly run out at the moment of our personal transition from this world to the next. We, too, should live in such a way that we may not be taken by surprise. There's nothing morbid about it; it's just plain practical.

© 2008, OCP. All rights reserved.

Gospel Acclamation Mark 1:15

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent and believe in the Gospel.

Gospel Mark 1:14-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

After John had been arrested,

Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:

"This is the time of fulfillment.

The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent, and believe in the gospel."

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee,

he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea;
they were fishermen.

Jesus said to them,

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

He walked along a little farther

and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

They too were in a boat mending their nets.

Then he called them.

So they left their father Zebedee in the boat
along with the hired men and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Lectionary for Mass in the Dioceses of the United States of America, volume I Copyright © 1970, 1997, 1998 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Commentary Mark 1:14-20 By Tom Conry: At the very beginning of today's gospel reading, with an abruptness that is characteristic of Mark, Jesus proclaims the core of his program. The kingdom of God has drawn near. Now all (!) that is left is for people to turn their lives around (the real meaning of "repent" asks for an act of imagination) and dare to believe the good news.

Two millennia of human history later, of course, we readers already know that doing this has proven somewhat more difficult than simply reciting it aloud. That is a key (one among several) to the secret of Mark's rhetorical power in this reading. The naked proclamation of Jesus' intention draws us back to a kind of original simplicity; it invites all of us who hear the text to re-imagine the world in a fundamentally new way. What would the world be like if God replaced Caesar on the world's throne? That is the subversive center of Jesus' plan, and its audacity explains why the empire decides that Jesus must be publicly executed, not simply done away with cheaply and privately. Both the empire and the reader will come to know that Jesus' "kingdom of God" is fundamentally incompatible with the Roman imperial occupation. A storm is coming, and here are the first stirrings of thunder.

After Jesus has thrown down the rhetorical gauntlet by proclaiming God's imperial rule here on earth, he begins to call those who will constitute the inner circle.

© 2003, OCP. All rights reserved.