

Homily of Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

The readings and the reflection of this Mass are continuing the theme of last Sunday's reflection which was God's call to each one of us to discipleship. God, in this Sunday's readings, has continued his call and invitation to us. We will examine three ways God is calling us to discipleship, and how we can respond.

First, in the first reading, Jonah announced to the people of Nineveh, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The reading continues, "When the people of Nineveh believed in 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." A way of applying the message of this reading is, there are people who must have to change their way of life or they ruin themselves. For such people, the change is necessary now, or it will be too late very soon. St. Paul warns in the second reading, "I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out." The first reading shows us how great God's mercy is. God forgave the people of Nineveh as soon as they believed in him and turned from their evil way. In the same way, God erases our sinful past when we repent, believe in him, and turn to him. God rescues us from the bondage of our ugly past as soon as we believe in him, turn to him and surrender.

Second, St. Paul instructs us in the second reading, "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." This can be interpreted to mean a call and invitation from God that we do not remain walled in, in our comfort zone, while neglecting persons and areas that need our attention. Maybe our attention is needed by the sick, or the elderly, or the lonely, or the depressed, or the hungry, or the community, or the church, or an organization, or a problem situation and so on. God wants us to get out from our comfort zone and give a helping hand where it is needed. However, it is important to pay tribute to, and to pray for men and women of good will who, generously, use their time, talent and wealth to serve God, the Church and humanity.

Third, the Gospel is St. Mark's account of the call of Simon, Andrew, James and John. These men were fishermen. When Jesus called them, they left everything and followed him. It is, also, important to pay tribute and to pray for priests, religious, missionaries and charity organizations who have to leave the job or profession they would have loved to engage in, their family, home, and country in order to become fishers of souls. Some of these fishers of souls work in life threatening conditions. Some lose their lives.

We continue to pray for an increase in vocation to priesthood and religious life, especially among African-Americans, so that from generation to generation we will not lack fishers of souls in the Catholic Church. Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful but laborers are few (Matthew 9:37).

Simon, Andrew, James and John left their boat, fish, nets, father and the men who worked for them to follow Jesus. In the same manner, we are invited to detach from ourselves whatever can become an obstacle to answering God's call and invitation.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP