

REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS

Jonah 3:1-5,10 - Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

In last Sunday's Gospel taken from John 1:35-42, we read about the two disciples of John the Baptist who experienced a personal encounter with Jesus. That memorable afternoon changed and transformed their life for good. Today's Gospel, taken from Mark 1:14-20, presents Jesus' first sermon and calling of the first disciples.

During the time they spend together, Jesus prepares his disciples for their future mission by letting them watch, observe and experience for themselves the love and mercy that God the Father has for all his children.

Unless the disciples experience first hand God's love and forgiveness, they will not be able to preach to others the Good News in Jesus' name.

Daily living with their Teacher will enable them to do so.

The disciples hear Jesus boldly proclaim throughout the villages and towns of Galilee: "THE TIME IS FULFILLED, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR; REPENT, AND BELIEVE IN THE GOOD NEWS."

This is how Jesus began to reveal the love of the Father's heart for his people.

In ancient times the prophets had numerous times urged Israel to remain faithful to God, and to repent whenever they fell into sin, and to trust in his mercy and forgiveness.

In today's First Reading we see an example of how God's love is even extended to people outside Israel. There we read about the prophet Jonah whom God sent to a pagan city, Nineveh, well known for its immoral and loose living. Jonah is told by God to go and preach repentance, or it will face destruction. As a result of Jonah's preaching, the people of Nineveh "believed God", they repented and proclaimed a time of fasting in reparation for their sins. Thus God showed them mercy and did not send the calamity that he had planned for them.

Jesus' proclamation in today's Gospel is not only for the people of his time, but also for us.

Especially during this pandemic, Jesus is inviting us to repent, to change our ways, and experience God's mercy: "THE TIME IS RIPE, DO NOT POSTPONE; the KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR".

If we yield his invitation and begin to live for God, He "will listen to our prayers and will heal our country" (2Chronicles 7:14).

There is no reason to be afraid: loving and trusting Jesus is the best vaccine. ` Nineveh did it. The disciples did it. SO CAN WE.