

The Third Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle B 2024

When God called Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh, he refused and travelled in the opposite direction. Why? Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria. The Assyrians had totally destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and exiled most of the Jews and then repopulated the land with foreigners. God had told Jonah that if the people of Nineveh failed to repent, the city would be destroyed. Therefore, Jonah, a Jew, refused to warn them. While Jonah was travelling in the opposite direction, God caused Jonah to be thrown overboard, to be swallowed by a large fish and to be spewed out on the shore near Nineveh. Jonah was obedient to God and preached repentance for three days in the city, but in his heart he had hoped that they would not listen to him and God would destroy the city as he had done to Sodom and Gomorrah. To his surprise the king and the people repented with fasting, sackcloth and ashes, and God spared the city. Jonah waited outside the city to see it being destroyed but it never happened.

Sometimes God calls us to do good for those we may dislike: to forgive or to love our enemies. Our refusal is because we often fail to understand the depths of his love and mercy, which we are called to imitate. Do not immediately reject God's call to do something we dislike or to do good for those we feel are undeserving. We have to struggle with it while speaking to God in prayer.

Although Jesus was the great miracle worker, and true man and true God, he recognized that he could not build his kingdom on earth (a society of peace and justice) by himself. In today's Gospel, he began to choose disciples whom he later called apostles: Peter and Andrew, and then James and John, to help him with his mission. Mark the Evangelist stressed the urgency of our response to God. Those who were called immediately stopped what they were doing and followed Jesus.

According to the website “Got Questions” *The word apostle means “one who is sent out.” In the New Testament, there are two primary usages of the word apostle. The first is in specifically referring to the [twelve apostles](#) of Jesus Christ. The second is in generically referring to other individuals who are sent out to be messengers/ambassadors of Jesus Christ.*

How do rate your response to a call from God to help others? Do I respond immediately? Or my answer may be I know that I need to do this, but I need more time. Or I will think about it, however, it may not be convenient for me. Or my schedule is busy, I do not have time for a God who is very demanding. He can get someone else to do it. Hebrews 3:15 says : “*If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts*”.

To harden your heart means to disobey God by rebellion to his teachings. God is our creator who has given us free will which is essential for someone to be able to love. God also knows the weaknesses in our human nature and his teachings is that we may have life to its fullest. Disobedience of his teaching leads in the long term, to misery and unhappiness.

If you are unhappy and miserable **or** there is no joy in your life, turn your whole life over to God and follow **not just some but all of his commandments**. You will be amazed by the amount of peace, gladness and joy that will fill your hearts. As a loving parent God is as unhappy as you are when you are unhappy, as he desires the best for you. Please allow him to help you.