

Homily - 24 January 2021 - Jonah 3:1-5,10. Mk 1:14-20
By: Fr. Paul Magyar

The theme in the readings this week is about being “fished out,” which in the Hebrew tradition means to be rescued.

Jonah is a Hebrew word that means “dove.” When Noah was in the ark awaiting for the flood waters to subside he sends out first a raven and then several days later a dove. The dove brings back an olive branch, the indication that the flood waters are subsiding, the sign of hope.

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh as God asked him to. However he eventually ends up jumping into the sea and being swallowed up by a whale. Jonah was in the belly of the whale and the whale eventually spits him out, on to the shore of Nineveh. The ancient religious meaning of being stuck in the belly of the whale is the hero’s journey into the unknown.

The hero Jonah, while in the depths of the sea in the belly of the whale, goes through a transformation. The mariner finds the spirit of God the Father, within the depths of the unknown. Jonah realizes that he needs to follow the voice and will of God. When the prophet emerges from the whale, onto land, he is now a transformed individual, a servant and disciple of God. The prophet Jonah speaks to the people of Nineveh who immediately follow his advice. The people repent their sins in order that their city and lives might be spared. Jonah the dove brought hope to the people of Nineveh.

God calls Jonah to be his prophet as Jesus calls Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John to be his first disciples. The four fishermen responded to Jesus’ call and followed him. Jesus tells the disciples that they will be fishers of people.

This term to be “fished out” is an ancient way of saying to be rescued. The imagery is not to trap people, like into a cult. The imagery is to rescue them out of the darkness and abyssmal depths of evil, sin and depression. Keeping in mind, when you think its bad, it can always become worse.

Jesus throughout his missionary journeys, teaches his disciples how to teach, preach, sanctify and govern. The goal is to fish the people out, preventing them from drowning in sin and bring them to the sea shore. We do this by living a sacramental life. One prayer, one confession, one mass at a time on a consistent basis is what keeps us head above water.

Praying for all of you
Fr. Paul Magyar