

## Readings for the 27<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year

**FIRST READING: Jonah 3:1-10**

**A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jonah:**

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "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 the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles: "Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; every man shall turn from his evil way and from the violence he has in hand. Who knows, God may relent and forgive, and withhold his blazing wrath, so that we shall not perish." 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.**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 130:1b-2, 3-4ab, 7-8**

*If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?*

**Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication.**

*If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?*

**If you, O LORD, mark iniquities, LORD, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered.**

*If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?*

**Let Israel wait for the LORD, For with the LORD is kindness and with him is plenteous redemption; And he will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.**

*If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?*

**Gospel: Luke 10:38-42**

**+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:**

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

**The Gospel of the Lord.**

## Reflection for the 27<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year

For three days, this week, we read excerpts from the book of Jonah the prophet. It is one of my favorite books. Here the prophet is portrayed not as a holy man of God, but an ordinary guy who's humanity got the best of him. Jonah received God's call twice. The first time he fled from God's mission and message by boat, which was, in his day, the fastest means of travel, in the opposite direction. He didn't get away for, as God's prophet, he remained in God's loving hands. With God's second call, he accepted the message and mission, reluctantly.

His prophetic message and mission was not to the people of Israel. His mission was unique to all God's prophets. He was sent to the ancient enemy who destroyed the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, captured their people and carried them off into Diaspora. Nineveh was the city of the pagan enemy. The people believed in idols, not God. It seemed an impossible task. Jonah really wanted God to destroy these unbelieving pagans and wipe them off the face of the earth. His message was consistent, though, "Repent!"

Within the time it took for Jonah to traverse the city of Nineveh with the message, lo and behold, all the people heard and repented. Thus God saved them. Jonah had fulfilled only half of his mission. He was to receive it as well. In the end he did not. God did exactly what Jonah feared. God was more loving and forgiving as was Jonah. Jonah remained vindictive and in the end still wanted the ancient enemy obliterated. I take the lesson of Jonah to heart.

For me to preach God's Word, I have to receive it first. If I ask someone to turn from sin, I must strive to repent as well. Paul prayed for sinners to repent, as he did so he stated that he was the first of them. However, God worked within the Ninevite people despite Jonah. They were, as was Jonah, God's children and beloved ones. God made them in God's image. There is only one human race created in God's image and likeness. Jonah's bigotry could not overcome God's love. What was Jonah's eventual fate? Jonah's vitriol was as limited as he was. God's love is infinite, eternal and unconditional. One can pray that God redeemed Jonah. After all, he was a beloved child of God too. We can place him into God's loving embrace and trust that God led him to repent.

Jonah focused on his tasked mission and not God's message. His humanity limited his perceptions. The same thing worked within the life of Martha. Hospitality may take preparation and work but being hospitable involves relationships. Martha was busy working and Mary spent time with Jesus. I point out that Jesus never condemned Martha; he prodded her with his words. Jesus sought a deeper relationship with her, not her alienation.

We have only three days with the story of Jonah from Monday to Wednesday. In this time we have become aware of Jonah's shortcomings and God's limitless compassion and mercy. This was active here in the gospel too. Martha was only human. Jesus is God and in God she found forgiveness as did Jonah and as do we. Maybe next time they can all go to a local café where the serving staff does all the work.

At least forty years ago I had a wonderful opportunity to visit a Middle Eastern home and experience a similar scenario to this one. I have an eastern rite priest friend. He's now a bishop for the Melkite Catholics here in the United States. At the time he was pastor of a parish in the Chicago area. He had a mission community on the far south side near Indiana. One Sunday, he invited another priest friend and me to join him and concelebrate their mass that they call the Divine Liturgy. This was for a Palestinian Catholic community. Afterwards, the community invited the three of us to join for coffee and pastry in a family's home.

The wife and kids did all the work. They worked in the background serving the guests, all men, coffee and Danish. The men entertained us. This reflected the ancient customs of the Middle East. In today's story the only man was the guest, Jesus. Martha and Mary were fulfilling their roles in the context of culture. Jesus challenged the culture more than he challenged Martha. He actually invited Martha to visit with him.

Repentance was the invitation that Jonah brought to the Ninevites. They and not he heard it. Martha heard Jesus as well. I wonder, within this context, do we hear Jesus' invitation to us? Jesus seeks a relationship with each of us.

May the love of God draw us more deeply into life.

James D. Beath  
October 5, 2021