



3rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **YEAR B – January 21, 2018**

The Scripture Readings today speak to us about repentance, about turning away from sin, about reforming, reshaping, refashioning our lives. We have heard the message before.

In the first reading (Jonah 3:1-5, 10), we hear how the Ninivites turned away from their evil ways and God spared them from destruction. To follow their example, we must first recognize our own sins and then turn away from them. We live at a time when it's easy to point out the sins of others and ignore our own. We use calumny and detraction as a diversion from what really needs our attention.

Watch the news on any given evening and learn about the corruption on Wall Street, switch the channel and hear about the corruption in the leadership of labor unions. Switch the channel again and hear how people in power are self-centered and don't care about the common good. We can find corruption everywhere, even in the Church. Whose fault is it? The blame game goes on and on and we get to choose who and what we want to believe

Today God tells us; put all that aside and look at yourself. What are the things in your life and mine that are not in accord with the teachings of Jesus? What are the things we need to change? Do we have the will to change? Do we know we can? Or do we just want to point out the speck in our brother's eye and continue to ignore the beam in our own.

In the second reading (I Corinthians 7:29-31), St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that all the things of this world will pass away. He tells them to get their priorities in order. That's what reforming, reshaping, refashioning our lives is all about (*metanoia μετάνοια*). It's not easy to do but it can be done.

In the Gospel (Mark 1:14-20) Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is not somewhere off in the distance. It is close at hand. It is actually within us. He challenges us to let go of our victimhood, and accept personal responsibility for where we are in life. Victor Frankl used to say this country needs a statue on the west coast. We have the statue of "liberty" on the east coast. We need the statue of "responsibility" on the west coast. "Liberty" without "Responsibility" is simply "License". License allows us to commit sin and call it something else. Recall the question of a well know psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menninger, "Whatever happened to sin?"

We have the responsibility to name our sins and let them go. Jesus says, "Repent!" It is the first word out of his mouth when he began his public ministry.

That word "repent" means more than "be sorry" for our sins. It means reform, reshape, and refashion our lives. And it means to do that in accord with the teachings of Jesus. We have the capacity to change. John Henry Newman reminds us, "To be human is to change, to be perfect is to have changed often".

If you are not yet perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, what needs to change in your life?

Conclusion

To err is human;
to forgive, Divine.

**"Therefore you shall be perfect, just
as your Father in heaven is perfect."
(Matthew 5:48)**