

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Listen With Care

By: Fr. John Foley, S.J.

Two stories of people being called by God. This we will hear on Sunday. Their reactions are very different, but they have this in common, that in both the people are given a direct invitation to do God's will.

Wouldn't it be wonderful for you and for me if we had such a direct invitation? Instead of going about in a fog and then trying our best to remember to pray once in a while and to get to Mass at least on Sunday, wouldn't it be great to be caught up into a cause that focused everything in our lives, drew us on like a far-shining star?

But there are some problems. The call to mission that God gave to Jonah in the First Reading was quite repugnant to Jonah. And the disciples whom Jesus called at the Sea of Galilee surely had no idea what they were getting themselves into when they dropped everything and followed him. Would they have been so quick if they had known about the crucifixion?

God says to Jonah, "Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and preach against it; their wickedness has come up before me" (Jonah 1:2). Jonah, like a house cat, does exactly the opposite of what he is asked. He does drop everything, but he runs in the opposite direction, to Joppa in order to find a ship to Tarshish, trying to get as far from the Lord as possible.

The story is well known: a terrible storm arises. Sailors were always afraid of having someone on board who brings bad luck, and in this case it is Jonah, fleeing the command of God. He tells them to throw him overboard in order to save themselves – a generous offer. They do not, until things get so bad that survival itself is at stake. They toss him in and the sea is quieted (and they are converted). But for his part, Jonah is swallowed by a "large fish," usually referred to in tradition as a whale.

Residence in the belly of the whale gives Jonah ample

reason to repent, and he does. God saves him and tells him a second time to go to the great and sinful city of Nineveh to give the Lord's message. Jonah does and the city is converted.

The nagging question now arises: why in the world didn't Jonah just follow God's first command instead of running the other way? Because he already had his own prejudice in place. Jonah did not want Nineveh, the pagan city, to convert and be saved because this city was an enemy of the Hebrews. Better for the city to perish in flames and ashes instead of to repent in ashes and sackcloth.

As for the apostles (Gospel), almost surely they were following Jesus for their own understandable but skewed reasons. Issues of livelihood and the excessive tax system most likely prompted them to go with this charismatic man whose reputation had preceded him. They were leaving everything in order to get into political action. Right response, wrong reason.

Do you still think it would be wonderful for you and for me if we had a direct invitation from God? Don't you already have some convictions about what you want and how things ought to be? In fact, if you pray, isn't your prayer often a pleading for God to make your own desires come true – instead of to make God's desires for you come true?

If so, it does not matter which kind of person you are: do you drop everything and follow (probably for skewed reasons) or do you run as fast as you can (in the other direction)? In either case, make sure to watch Jesus during the weeks to come.

He will show us what it means to let go of everything we are, and everything we have in order to follow the loving, respectful, tender goals of God, the great lover of souls.

What better could we want?

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Jonah 3:1-10 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Mark 1:14-20

January 25, 2015

靈 修 生 活

來 跟 隨 我

「悔改」令人聯想認清自己的過錯，對過失感到抱歉，不再重蹈覆轍。可是，今天耶穌所宣講的悔改與一般人眼中的悔改不同。在馬爾谷福音中，耶穌所宣講的悔改是附帶著一個特定的結果，就是信從福音。

我相信你我也願意信從福音，可是這是否意味單是聽從某些信息呢？福音意謂喜訊，這喜訊也是耶穌基督本身，因為耶穌不單把福音帶到世上，而且親身完成福音的計劃，故信從福音不單只是接受一些超越時空的真信息，而其結果必是親近耶穌，與耶穌建立關係，所以信從福音不單是相信，也是跟從耶穌基督，由此可見，耶穌所談的悔改包含更積極的一面，其中包括實際行動，籍著跟隨耶穌，提升自己的生活。

今天的福音只是簡單地記下耶穌召叫門徒的經過，耶穌以一番話：「來，跟隨我，我要使你們成為漁人的漁夫。」就是這話使西滿和安德肋作了兩個連貫的動作：拋下魚網、跟隨了耶穌。拋下魚網象徵放棄過去的生活，放棄他們從小而從事的家庭工作，過去他們籍著依賴家庭及雙手迎接明天的來臨，所以拋下魚網表示不再依賴自己的能力、視野及過去的生活條件；跟隨耶穌代表著他們願意有一個新的生活、新的開始，這個開始是以耶穌為中心的，由那刻起，耶穌成為他們學習的對象，他們願意學習以耶穌的眼光來生活，他們完全地信賴耶穌，耶穌成為他們邁向明天的憑藉。

在召叫的過程中，西滿和安德肋對耶穌沒有說：「看看怎麼樣」、「改天再算」、或「等會兒」，而是「立刻」採取行動，這行動反映出他們意識甚麼，雖然馬爾谷福音沒有談論他們的過去，我們不知道他們的生活究竟是好是壞；馬爾谷福音也沒有交代他們過去與耶穌的接觸，我們不知道耶穌花了多少時間，好讓這兩位漁夫信任祂，可是，對西滿和安德肋來說，跟隨耶穌明顯地比他們過去的生活更有意義，所以他們好像不必再加考慮，他們把握眼前的時機，不容半點遲疑，「立刻」回應，兩位門徒以這明快的舉動表達他們信從耶穌的心。

我們雖然已受洗加入教會，可是耶穌對我們的召叫仍持續著，就如那天耶穌召叫門徒一樣，耶穌其望我們的回應不是一天，而是一生，這是我們基督徒的人生目標，所以，我們要以當機立斷的態度，繼續學習一天比一天更信從福音。

禱辭：全能永生的天主，求祢指引我們、以言以行，實踐祢的意願，使我們在祢愛子的名下，結出豐碩的善果。因祢的聖子、我們的主耶穌基督，祂和祢及聖神，是唯一天主，永生永王。亞孟。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 五 年 一 月 廿 五 日

約 3:1-10; 格前 7:29-31; 谷 1:14-20