

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Oct 7th 2013

When my daughters were young story time was a precious time of the day. After the busyness of the day followed by dinner time and baths my two sweet girls and I would cuddle up to read stories. Well I would read and they would attentively listen. We explored the world through all kinds of tales. And on long car trips when we didn't have our books with us we would play a game we invented called: I'm thinking of a character. One person would share about the details of the character's life and we would guess which character was being featured. I was always delighted by how well my daughters got to know their favorite characters through literature.

Reading stories was a wonderful way for them to have begun their faith formation. We read about the lives of the saints and Jesus and about several characters from the Bible. One of their favorite stories was Jonah and the Whale. As I think back they must have been quite impressed by Jonah's adventure. They considered whales to be kind and gentle just like their Papa, my father, who was a kind and gentle giant of a man. So hearing about a man who was swallowed by a whale, who was in the belly of the whale for three days and then landed on shore must have sounded like a great adventure. My daughters were confident about God's love for Jonah.

As I read the story of Jonah today I feel scared especially as I view the story from Jonah's perspective. What must he have wanted to avoid to run from God's assignment to go to Nineveh. And once he was on the ship how terrifying to experience such a death defying storm only to have the ship's crew toss you overboard as they bartered for calm seas. And then the big fish. This does not seem like a pleasant adventure in any way. While he must have been so scared in the dark, squishy belly of the big fish, Jonah turned to God in prayer.

Contemplating this story of Jonah and the Whale from a fresh perspective leads me to ask myself when I have turned from God? Was I overwhelmed? Did I think I knew better? Was I just not listening at all? I think about fear and how fear can be so paralyzing and can prevent one from embracing true love. I reflect upon the times in my life where I have had moments, moments not three days, in the belly of the fish and how I prayed to God for forgiveness and guidance.

Before going to bed tonight I plan to look through a few of the favorite storybooks we have stashed in the bookcase in my living room. I'm thinking of a character...

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