

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Oct 9th 2017

I tried to imagine what it would be like to be swallowed by a large fish, remaining in its belly, and then getting vomited out. But wait, don't we all have a similar experience when we are going through a difficult time in our lives. We might feel swallowed up by life, left sitting in the darkness of despair for hours, days or even years, until we are kicked out back into the world.

When God called, Jonah ran away, but it was clear that he never stopped believing that God is merciful. From Jonah, we learn what to do when we are overwhelmed and sitting in the darkness; we pray. "Out of my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me," says Jonah. He believed in God's mercy. How often do we find ourselves too angry or afraid to call to the Lord for help? How often do we doubt the mercy of God, believing only in a vengeful God? Maybe remaining in the belly of the Fish – being buried in the darkness that life would sometimes engulf us with – is an opportunity to be born again, to be free of fear, to appreciate the light and mercy. So, maybe when life throws us the unexpected, we could breathe deeply, stay still in the turbulence, pray, and trust God. When we call on the Lord, the Lord will answer us. God is loving and merciful, and God wants us to show mercy to everyone we encounter.

In today's Gospel, Love and Mercy are the themes. The story of the good Samaritan invites us to consider everyone we meet to be a neighbor, but more importantly, we are invited to be a good neighbor. Yes, a compassionate and merciful neighbor. It is easy to be a good neighbor to people whom we want to impress, or people we care about, or people we just like, but can we be the same to the stranger on the street, the lonely, the depressed, the person with AIDS, the addict, those who don't look like us, talk like us, or have different beliefs? Can we be compassionate and merciful neighbors to people who are of a different race or from a different country? When was the last time anyone of us truly looked into the eyes of someone who was being bullied, or cared about the story of a refugee? How can we be a neighbor to people we hardly look at or are too afraid to care about? Maybe if we saw the presence of God in everyone we encountered, we would open our minds, our hearts, our beings, and compassion and mercy will radiate out of us, because we are children of God. In essence, we would have awoken into life. So, let's ask ourselves this: have I being a merciful and compassionate neighbor today?

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