

ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

3rd Sunday
in Ordinary Time, B
January 24, 2021

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**Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa
 Pastor**

For the time being, our Sunday Masses are held outdoors, by the Parish Hall, on Saturdays at 4:30 PM and on Sundays at 8:30 AM. Please come in a face mask and observe social distancing (6 ft. between people of different households).

In what is necessary, unity; in what is not necessary, liberty and in all things, charity.
 — St. Augustine

1st Reading:

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying: "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 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.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD.

R.
 Good and upright is the LORD; thus, he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice and teaches the humble his way.

R.

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.

From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully.

For the world in its present form is passing away.

The Word of the Lord.

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

I will be undergoing a medical procedure on January 31-Feb 1 (Sunday -Monday), at a clinic in San Diego.

Thus, there will be no 8:30 AM Sunday Mass next Sunday Jan. 31st. However, in its stead, I will say a second Sunday Mass on Jan. 30th (Sat.).

As the bishop allows, during the pandemic, a Sunday anticipated Mass starting after 12 noon of Saturday, our two Sunday Masses next weekend may be said on Saturday, Jan. 30th: the first at 4:30 PM — as usual; and the 2nd will be an earlier Mass, perhaps either at 1:00 pm or at 3:00 pm when the sun spreads a blanket of shade in the alley by the church building and parish hall where our Mass is held.

At our 8:30 AM Mass today, Jan. 24th, I will ask the Mass attendees if they will attend an earlier Saturday PM Mass on Jan. 30th. If there are at least 10 or more persons who will say yes, I will say the Mass; otherwise, I will just say it privately.

Responsorial Psalm:

"Teach me your ways, O Lord."

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. **R.**

Lector: Alleluia, alleluia.

All: Alleluia, alleluia.

Lector: The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.

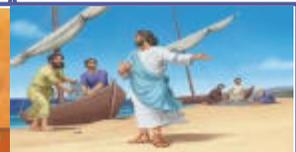
All: Alleluia, alleluia.

Acclamation:

When we eat this **bread** and drink this **cup**, we proclaim your **death**, O Lord, until you **come again**.

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Jesus' Calling His First Disciples



REFLECTING ON THE WORD . . . GUIDEPOSTS

PLACE CHRIST IN THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE!

Like the gospel of last Sunday, today's gospel presents to us the call of Jesus' first disciples. It brings home the message that genuine or mature Christian faith consists in a **DIRECT PERSONAL EXPERIENCE** of Jesus in one's life.



The need for a direct personal experience is expressed in Jesus' words "*Come and see,*" as a response to the disciples' question "*Rabbi, where do you live?*" in last Sunday's gospel. In today's Gospel, it is expressed in Jesus' words, "*Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.*" These are words to express the message that as Jesus' disciples, we will be successful in the mission of evangelization, of bringing people to faith in Christ if our actions and words are based on a direct personal experience of Jesus. The following anecdote may help bring home the message.

A story about life in the 1950's in this country relates the experience of a kid who loved the circus. He was a diehard fan of a particular flying trapeze circus performer. While there were other attractions in the small city, this boy would watch only the performance of the flying trapeze every evening that the circus was in town, and he would always sit in the front row to be closest to the performer. During a performance one evening, the trapeze flyer noticed the now familiar sight of the boy. He approached the boy to express his appreciation. The boy was so excited and responded, saying: "*You are my idol, my hero. That is why I come here to watch you every time you perform. I have faith in you. I know you can always complete with ease your seemingly impossible tricks way up in the arena.*" "*Thank you very much for your faith in me, I am honored and flattered*" -- replied the trapeze flyer. He then went on to say: "*As a reward for your faith and trust in me, I invite you, come and join me in my next performance. I want to give you the privilege of experiencing the feelings of flying in the air with me.*" The boy's lips quivered as he responded: "*No, no, please don't ask me to come with you. I'm afraid. I'm fine here. It's enough for me to admire you from a distance.*"

When Jesus tells us — his disciples, to follow him, He asks us to place him in the center of our life, to experience him directly as Emmanuel — the God who is with us and in us, to experience genuine inner peace, the peace of Christ.

To translate the above into spirituality, let our every prayer culminate in contemplation. Whenever we pray — whether it is the Mass or novenas or spontaneous prayers or other rituals — we should not forget to conclude it or follow it up with moments of contemplation, a silence that allows us to feel the presence of God in us, to enable us to listen to Him talking to us.

THE BLESSINGS OF REPENTANCE

"Repent and Believe" could also be the headline for the scripture readings today.

A reluctant Jonah will preach for God in Nineveh (first reading), calling to repentance those for whom the prophet had little love or compassion.

Much to Jonah's dismay but to God's delight, the sinners of Nineveh believed God's word, repented and were subsequently blessed with deliverance. Their repentance effected a new beginning in their lives and an introduction to the God whose name they did not know but whose beloved children they discovered themselves to be nevertheless.

In today's Gospel, we are asked to remember that in order to welcome the blessing of the Gospel into our lives, we are first to repent, i.e., to reform our lives so as to create an atmosphere wherein faith can grow.

The reform or repentance called for by Jesus will require a radical transformation of our orientation and lifestyle. The enthusiastic response of the first disciples prompts us to ask of ourselves:

What or who am I willing to leave behind to follow Jesus? Are there people I associate with who are actually bad influences and therefore I should avoid? Are there things that I am used to doing or having but actually jeopardize my life of faith and therefore I should get rid of? How absolute is my repentance?

A BACKGROUND TO TODAY'S FIRST READING

Not history, the book of Jonah is one of the grandest parables in the Scriptures. It is interesting precisely because it is a parable. A fictional story written to cast us into the mystery of God and God's demands to practice mercy and forgiveness.

Nineveh had been the capital of Assyria, a kingdom that was brutal in its conquests, and Israel was not spared in its brutality. Thousands died during Assyria's attempt to conquer Israel. As Assyria's capital, Nineveh came to be regarded as a most cruel oppressor of Israel, even after centuries had passed.

It was a challenge for the listeners of this parable to accept that God would invite anyone outside of Israel to faith let alone brutal oppressors, but the story is told in order to teach how willing God is to forgive. God could forgive even Nineveh despite the horrible things they had done if they would only repent and believe.

When Jonah sees imminent revenge on the people who all but destroyed Israel, he becomes angry when God instead accepts their repentance.

THE URGENCY IN CHRIST'S MISSION

"Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed"

(First Reading).

"The time is running out . . . the world as we know it is passing away" *(Second Reading).*

"The kingdom of God is at hand! Reform your lives." *(Gospel).*

The lesson for all disciples ---right up to today --- is to respond to Christ's coming with a sense of urgency. Time waits for no one, including the building of God's kingdom. Every life may seem full of years, but the years pass quickly. Procrastination must be overcome.

Remember the story of the hare and the tortoise. The hare was miles ahead of the tortoise, almost at the finish line, but he was tired from all that running. He decided to stop and rest because he had a large lead on that sluggish tortoise. While he was napping the tortoise passed the sleeping hare and crossed the finish line well before the hare awoke. In the end, the hare's procrastination cost him the race.

This week's readings remind us that Christ's message is not something to do "someday" or even "later." Like the slow but steadfast tortoise, Christ's message demands a dedicated response to begin now --- in this present moment.

DIRECTIONS TO EXPLORE, TO PONDER:

- We are not guaranteed long life; acknowledging this fact is not morbid but realistic.
- Enjoying the good things of life without becoming dependent upon them for true happiness or misusing them in ways that become sinful.
- A reality check: Are we seeking what we say are the most important things?
- God's immediate, overwhelming welcome at our desire to reform our lives.
- It's never too late to change.



January 18-25: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Today is the penultimate day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In a time when the sad divisions that separate the Christian churches seem even stronger,

let each one of us say a prayer for Christian unity.

Eternal Father, we praise you for sending your Son to be one of us and to save us. Look upon your people with mercy, for we are divided in so many ways, and give us the Spirit of Jesus to make us one in love. We ask this gift, loving Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

CELEBRANT: Let us join with Christians throughout the world and together, with faith and hope, present our prayers to the One God.

LECTOR:

- 1) During this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, let us pray for church leaders who are seeking paths to unity . . . for a spirit of hospitality and cooperation in building the Kingdom . . . *we pray to the Lord.*
- 2) We pray for the leaders of government and all those who affect public policy . . . for people of influence in business, the media, education, the churches and health care . . . *we pray to the Lord.*
- 3) We pray for all victims of abortion: for the children who did not live and grow . . . for the women who grieve the loss of their children . . . for every person who is valued less by the legal sanction of taking a human life . . . *we pray to the Lord.*
- 4) We pray for those whose lives are at risk . . . for the very old and the very young and those yet to be born . . . for the poor, disabled, imprisoned, unemployed, uneducated . . . for those without hope for their future . . . *we pray to the Lord.*
- 5) That we, the People of God and Body of Christ, open our hearts to the call of Jesus to proclaim the Gospel with our lives, *we pray to the Lord.*
- 6) That all who have died in servicing the human family, especially those who have sacrificed their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic, receive the heavenly reward of their labors, *we pray to the Lord.*

CELEBRANT: Gracious Lord, listen to the prayers we present you. Change our hearts by the power of your Spirit, through Christ our Lord.

We pray for our beloved parishioner **+ROSE GLEASON** who passed on to eternal life on January 14, 2021. We extend our most heartfelt sympathies to her son John and family. May they and all of us who miss Rose be comforted by Rose's entrance into heaven where she is now reunited with her beloved Robert and with all the angels and saints with the Triune God in their midst to whom they now in unison eternally and gloriously sing HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD, GOD OF HOSTS.



PLEASE INCLUDE IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS . . .

God's blessing of good health on Steven Goetz (for his recovery and rehab from car accident), **Michael Gordon** (for his recovery from surgery), **Joseph Lechuga, Michael & Yvonne Schaaf** (for their recovery from COVID-19); And God's blessing of eternal life on **+Rose Gleason, +Vincent Michael Tiger, Sr., +Rachel Dominguez, +Julio Somoza, Sr., +Francisco Felix, and +Gail Inman.**



COLLECTIONS FOR PARISH SUPPORT:

Via Mail & Mass: Jan. 16-17, 2021: \$ 668

Via Online: Jan. 11-17, 2021: \$ 185

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