

Readings

Jon 3:1-5, 10

Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Cor 7:29-31

Mk 1:14-20

Aldo R. Potencio, O.S.A.
Secretary Treasurer
Province of St. Thomas of Villanova

Milestones are important events for many of us. We deem it important to mark significant moments that have happened in our lives, such as birthdays, graduations, promotions at work, anniversaries, etc.

And as we celebrate these milestones, it is important to also remember, that as significant as they are, they are just markers in our journey of life. The achievements we reach invite us to pause and reflect, and maybe even bask in our successes. But those moments are not the end; rather, they are just moments of pause. We are to continue our journey after all.

Our readings today remind us of something that is central in our life of faith, and that is the necessity for conversion. Repentance was preached by Jonah to the people of Nineveh when their actions and lives were displeasing to God. Jesus proclaimed this message as well at the beginning of his ministry according to the gospel of Mark. “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15).

As we reflect on this gift of conversion, we are also called to remember that this is not just a moment in the life of a person of faith, it is ongoing. Our life as people of faith is marked by this ongoing work of conversion, through the grace of God. Even as we move forward in our journey of faith and we see and enjoy the fruit of God’s grace in our life, it is but a pause and we must continue on this journey of faith.

This journey is about our constant discernment of God's will and our willingness to say "yes" to what God is asking of us. The action of the Ninevites is a prime example of this conversion experience. Hearing the word of God from Jonah was the inspiration for them, and they turned from their evil ways.

The power of grace is so great that even words spoken through imperfect human beings can reflect the perfect goodness and mercy of God.

God continues to speak his words to us in various ways, especially in our moments of being lost. And inviting us to respond to his call and return to his way.

In a way, this is a conversion that is personal and intimate, for the "yes" we say back is a personal and intimate act. But this ongoing journey to conversion finds its fullness in the reaching out and sharing this message of repentance and faith in the gospel.

We become like Jonah, imperfect yet chosen and made worthy to experience and to speak words of salvation for others.

A life of conversion is never a life lived alone, but a life that bears fruit in the sharing and the welcoming we do for the sake of building up the body of Christ.

Even as Jesus preached the message of the kingdom of God and the message of repentance, he called his first disciples to follow him so that they too would call others to also follow him. The experience of ongoing conversion is both personal and communal, if we are to be true disciples of Christ.

And so, as we remember those special moments of grace, those significant experiences of conversion. We remember that we are still called to continue in this journey of faith. We are still called to open our hearts to the words that God is speaking to us and to share those words of hope to those whom we encounter in this journey.