

January 24, 2021

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jon 3:1-5, 10

1 Cor 7:29-31

Mk 1:14-20

GROW: On first hearing, Jonah's warning to the city of Nineveh seems a bit extreme for my modern ears: Get your act together in 40 days or your city will be destroyed! Yet, rather than panic or rail against him, the people believed and turned away from evil. We hear a similar theme in Mark's Gospel: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Listening to the readings today, I hear these words not as a threat but as an invitation to get our lives back on track. We may not don sackcloth like the people of Nineveh, but we may need to fast from the distractions and skewed priorities that prevent us from loving God and one another. With the psalmist, we pray, "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior."

GO: I never understood why the middle-school track coach had my son, the shortest kid on the team, run hurdles. I'd shut my eyes and cringe a bit when he'd approach each one, occasionally catching his toe but fearlessly pressing forward. Sometimes the Christian life can feel that way – while I've never tried hurdles, I'm known to trip on the slightest crack in a sidewalk. Likewise, I often trip up on the path to becoming a better person – blurting out unkind words, spending more time online shopping than praying ... well, I won't make *you* cringe by oversharing my "sin list." In today's readings, the Lord invites us to repent – to turn away from bad habits and choices. By turning to the Lord, we can overcome the obstacles that hold us back from living our Gospel values and sharing them with others through the witness of our lives.

INVITE: Through the sacrament of reconciliation, the Church offers us a standing invitation to experience God's unconditional love and mercy. Whether you go regularly or it's been awhile, consider participating in the sacrament and inviting others to do the same.