

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Jonah Representing Christ Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time Monday,
October 9, 2017 8:15 AM **Jon 1:1—2:2, 11;** LK 10:25-37 (St. Denis, bishop and
companions, martyrs; St. John Leonardi) (There was always a remnant of people who are really
in touch with God and longing for the sort of freedom and liberation and redemption that
eventually comes in Christ.)

Today we are reading from the **Book of the prophet Jonah**. Well, it's called the prophet Jonah, but everyone knows that this is novel. It represents a rather extraordinary work, an extraordinary product of the religious imagination of Israel. I believe it was produced about four centuries before Christ, and yet **look at all the ways in which Jonah actually represents Christ**. There is a different proportionality; for example, Jonah tries at great length to get away from God. Well **Christ never tried to get away from God, but he did experience the agony in the garden when he had to wrestle with this responsibility God was calling him to**, to bring salvation to the whole world. Jonah likewise wrestled with this great responsibility God gave him to preach the word of God to Nineveh.

Now Nineveh represents you might say the worst of humanity. And the whole idea here is that God does not come into the world to reward the just, to give help to the good, but **God comes to transform the wicked**. God comes to bring life to the dead. And the Book of Jonah understands this, although many of the leaders of Israel at the time of Christ did not understand this. But Jonah did, or the author, whoever that was.

When it becomes obvious that the power of God really is intent on the mission, **we see Jonah on a boat very similar to the bark of Peter, similar to the boat on the Lake of Galilee tossed by winds, and Jonah, like Christ, is asleep**. And when the sailors, who are very agitated and very anxious for their own life, wake him up, **Jonah, like Christ, agrees to be sacrificed**, and is thrown overboard. Like Christ, **Jonah is absorbed, in this case by a fish; in Christ's case he is absorbed by the earth itself in the tomb for three days**.

But in the power of resurrection Christ rises, and here through God's intervention this **fish spews Jonah out and he continues his mission to the people of Nineveh, just as Christ enters into hell to free the captives**. And as we will read later this week of course the people in Nineveh respond in an astonishing way, in a way that out strips in every way the response of the chosen. **The chosen are frozen, but the depraved of Nineveh turn around**, renouncing their past, and accepting God's word.

As I say, it's remarkable that the imagination of Israel produces this four centuries before Christ, meaning that **there was always a remnant of people who are really in touch with God and God's plans and God's purposes, and really longing for the sort of freedom and liberation and redemption that eventually comes in Christ**.