

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 01/21/2024.

READINGS Jonah 3: 1-5, 10; 1cor. 7:29-31; Mk. 1: 14 -20.

THEME: WE ARE CALLED & COMMISSIONED:

In our readings today, we hear that the citizens of Nineveh needed to **Repent** and the people of Corinth were to remember that time is running out - that the things of this world are passing away. So, too, we are called to focus our attention on that which is eternal, namely, Jesus.

As were Peter & Andrew, James & John. They were called and so are we to be on God's "Fishing Team" and the bait to be used was and is the way we live and the Good that we proclaim. We are all called to spread the Good News by being the Good News.

"Jesus said to them, come after me, and I will make you fishers of Men."

First of all, fishermen often have to continually **venture out to different areas** in search of fish. They can't simply wait for the fish to come to them. They have to be on the move day after day, night after night, **seeking and pursuing**. And so, as disciples, maybe we need to do the same. A true "fisher of men" is someone who looks for opportunities to share the Gospel with others, share what faith means to him or her, share this great gift not with a few, **but with many**.

Secondly, fishermen often have to use **just the right bait**. If they use the wrong bait, they might find themselves catching nothing. But with the right bait, fishermen can sometimes catch fish as fast as they can throw their line into the water. And so, as disciples, as spreaders of the Gospel, as "fishers of men", **what bait do we use?** What do we use to **draw people in**, to attract them to the Lord, to ourselves, and to our message?

Sometimes we frame our religious talk with language of the "wrong" bait. Language that would never attract one to Jesus. The bait that "works", the bait that is the most faithful reflection of **who we are as followers of Jesus is** love and kindness and mercy and generosity. These are the things that will draw people in, make them want to be part of the family of faith. Fear doesn't work. Fancy intellectual arguments never work. Arrogance or self-rightness never work. Love works. Always will - for God is love. And that is the **only bait we'll ever need**.

Thirdly, fishermen often catch their fish and bring them onto some sort of boat. For the Catholic Christian that boat is the church, a kind of "ark" that keeps us safe as we journey on the stormy waters of life. The church is a lifeline, a refuge, a place of forgiveness and welcome and community and love. Do we talk about the church in those terms?

And so, as we step out in faith to be "fishers of men" let's adopt a policy that is becoming more and more common. The policy of love.