

PEDRO ARRUIPE INSTITUTE, RAIA - GOA

REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY LITURGY

24th January 2021 – Third Sunday In Ordinary Time

JON 3: 1-5, 10 | 1 COR 7: 29-31 | MK 1: 14-20

Theological Track: Fr. Anderson Fernandes SJ

THE TIME FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOW

If there was one common thread that runs through the readings of the day, it is the concept of time and a certain sense of urgency. Even though it does not stand out palpably, if you look closely at the readings, you'll find that there is some kind of immediacy. Words like 'set out', 'time is running out', 'this is the time of fulfilment' and several other imperatives in our liturgy this Sunday reiterates this point.

When Jonah was commissioned to preach the message, it was with this sense of urgency. He wasn't to listen to this message and sit put. He knew that, the earlier the people of Nineveh repented, so much the better for them. St. Paul while writing to the Corinthians, speaks with this same urgency to live according the message taught to them beginning NOW and not at a later stage. This was partly due to St. Paul's naive understanding of the imminent resurrection of Jesus, but no one is or will be harmed if one decides to live a better life, sooner the better.

Jesus says as he begins his preaching in Galilee: **'The Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News'**. What is the Kingdom of God?

It is not so much a place but rather a web of relationships, the most important being our relationship with Jesus. The word **repent** comes from the word '**metanoia**' which means to look at things (at life) in *a new way*. It means looking at life as Jesus does, living by gospel values of love, forgiveness, compassion, kindness etc. So the Kingdom of God belongs to all those who accept and try to live by the vision of life that Jesus gave us. Metanoia may mean a change of direction as regards the priorities in my life. It is much more a **turning to** than a turning **from**. Not so much a turning from unchristian behaviour even though it will involve that, than to a turning to the person of Jesus and entering into a real personal relationship with him. It means a total commitment of my life to Jesus, throwing in my lot with him without any guarantees or conditions.

Jesus inaugurated this 'Kingdom' project. He preached, taught, healed and furthered the Kingdom of God. He now needs volunteers, others to partner him in bringing the complete project to fulfilment. For this reason he chooses and calls disciples to help him in this endeavour. In contrast to last week's Gospel from John, in Mark's Gospel Jesus takes the initiative in calling his first disciples. As mentioned last week, it was more typical of first-century rabbinical schools for students to seek out rabbis, asking to be their disciples. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus breaks with this tradition and invites his disciples to learn from him.

Mark's Gospel is told with a great sense of urgency and immediacy. Jesus is a person of action, and events occur in rapid succession. We see this in today's Gospel. Time is of the essence; the fishermen immediately put aside their livelihood to become Jesus' disciples. The Kingdom of God is here and now. The time of fulfilment is at hand. How might our lives be different if we more fully shared this sense of the immediacy of God's kingdom?