

HOMILY 3RD Sunday Ordinary Time

January 24, 2021

How many of you watched the inauguration this past week? I was not able to see much of it, just bits and pieces, but from what I saw it gave me reason to be hopeful. This has nothing to do with political parties, but with a new administration we can see it as a fresh start. All of the violence that they were expecting never happened, that gave me hope. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel with COVID-19, and it is not an oncoming train, it is the light of Christ that I see. Maybe this is an opportunity to look at what did not work so well in the past, learn from it, let it go, and move forward in the light of Christ.

In the first reading today, we encounter Jonah. He is a classic example of someone that was unable to let go of the past. If you remember the Jonah story, God came to Jonah and wanted him to warn the Ninevites that they had 40 days to repent or they would be destroyed. Jonah did not want to do this. Jonah hated the Ninevites. He wanted to see them destroyed, so he got on a boat and sailed in the opposite direction. They were caught in a storm and the people on the boat thought it was Jonah's fault because he was running away from God, so they threw him overboard. He was swallowed by a large fish, spent three days in its stomach, and then was spewed out on the shore of Nineveh. God asked him again to warn the people of Nineveh, and after what he had just been through, Jonah reluctantly decided he better do that. Jonah was on foot warning the people. I doubt that he was very convincing. It took three days to cross Nineveh, but after just one day of warning, everyone repented -from the King to all of the animals. No prophet in the history of Israel ever had such success. Their repentance involved a sincere regret and they also changed their ways. What more could Jonah hope for? He was a great success, and the people changed their ways. But

Jonah could not let go of the past. He still wanted to see Nineveh destroyed. The next day he was still so upset that he just wanted to die.

We have seen what happens when we divide ourselves into democrats and republicans and everyone digs their heels in and will not budge. Nothing happens. That is the problem. I cannot believe that all republican legislators agree on everything and all democratic legislators agree on everything. That does not happen with groups of intelligent people. We need to consider all different points of view. That is how we make good decisions. I know with my Parish Pastoral Council, I try to pick people who will tell me what they are thinking. That is how I can make better decisions. If everyone just agrees with me there is no point in having the meetings. Change will not happen overnight, but change has to start with all of us. We need to be open to people with differing opinions, try to understand one another better, let the light of Christ shine on us and do what is right. And we need to stop politicizing everything.

I think many of us have been disturbed by all of the hate and violence in our country in recent months. There is no place for hate and violence. We have to recognize the hate, own it, and let the light of Christ shine on it so that we can let go if it. Hate and violence cannot drive out hate and violence, only love can do that. Jesus can show us how to love.

We also have a problem with racism in our country. I think for a time we thought we had made great progress, and we have to an extent, but we still have a ways to go. We need to become aware of our biases and let the light of Christ shine on them.

I think we need to look at what has not worked in the past, let the light of Christ shine upon it and learn from it. We need to let go of the past and move forward into the future. If we do what we have always done, we will get what we have always gotten. The people of Nineveh had an internal

change of heart that changed the future of Nineveh. This can be a new beginning. We can have a better future. God's love created the world and saved it. God's love can recreate it.