

Homily – Deacon Brian Cordeiro – 120121-22

There are events in our lives when we have to make critical decisions that have a profound impact on our lives. It could be the choice of our marriage partner or a long-term job opportunity. Whatever we decide, it has long-term consequences for us. Sometimes, such decisions need to be taken right away.

For example, you may get a job offer that you were not expecting and you need to give an answer immediately as to whether you are accepting the offer or not. **The key word is immediate. You need to act immediately.**

Our readings today give us examples of an immediate decision that needed to be made. In each case, the decision was whether to follow God or not. In the first reading, the prophet Jonah announces to the city of Nineveh that it is going to be destroyed and the people of Nineveh **immediately** repent.

What a refreshing contrast to the attitude of Jonah himself. For pious Jews like Jonah, Nineveh was the godforsaken city, the highway to perdition where evil reigned without any hope of change. God had to go through more trouble converting Jonah the preacher, than the people of Nineveh. Jonah had gone to preach to the Ninevites, but he did not love them.

What a contrast between God's attitude towards the inhabitants of Nineveh and Jonah's! God spared Nineveh, Jonah had given up on them even before he delivered God's message to them.

Even today, God seeks you and me to send us on missions to Nineveh. **Where is our Nineveh today?** Our Nineveh today is found in the back-streets and alleys of our cities. It is found in the ivory tower of the corporate establishment where the destinies are decided without any attention to welfare.

Jonah was not sent to the people of Israel who were believers; neither are we called to minister to churchgoers alone. God invites us to bring the Good News to unimaginable places and "impossible" situations. The good news for us is that these "hopeless" cases are not too hopeless after all. For if Nineveh could turn back to God, so can they!

In today's gospel, we see the would-be apostles, Simon and Andrew, called to **make a radical decision about the rest of their lives.** They are fishermen. They are busy with their trade, casting nets. They hear the word of God addressed to them by Jesus: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people" (Mark 1:17). They leave their nets at once and follow Jesus.

But the decision to follow Jesus is risky business; we do not know where it will lead us. Why should we take this grave risk? I would like to retell an old story. "Straniks" in Russian religious tradition were Pilgrims or searchers. They did odd

jobs for their support – on a day to day basis; they were “helpers” on the roads. They walked with God even though they were “discovering” what walking with God might lead to.

One evening, a Stranik was settling under a tree at the edge of town for a good night’s sleep under the stars. Suddenly a merchant comes running from the town crying, “The jewel, the jewel!” He told the pilgrim that he had dreamt the night before that a pilgrim would sleep under that tree and would have a most precious jewel.

The pilgrim remembered he had found a beautiful stone in the mountains some time ago. He found it at the bottom of his backpack and showed it to the businessman. “I’ll give you everything I own for that stone” he exclaimed. The Stranik gave it to him for free! The man was ecstatic and went home to celebrate.

The next morning he returned to the Stranik and gave the stone back to him. “I could not sleep all night.” “I want you to tell me what made it possible for you to just give it away so easily!” And the Stranik replied: It is the joy of discovering the Kingdom of God or God Himself. Indeed the treasure of knowing God is a treasure that is worth giving up everything for.

Today, in the second in our series on discipleship, we are asked to think of our response to offering our time and talent. We realize that with God, we have suddenly and immediately.

Very often, God will make known his plan for you suddenly and your response must be immediate or the opportunity passes you by. It is as if God wants to test your trust in Him and our generosity of heart in responding. Am I generous in offering my time in the service of the kingdom?

When a request is made of me that involves giving my time or using my talents, am I generous enough so that my first response is: Yes Lord, Sure Lord?

Let us pray that when that suddenly comes to us from God, that we will firstly recognize that God is speaking and that we will have the courage to make the decision to choose God immediately keeping in mind the treasure of the kingdom of God that surpasses everything else.