



Deep Faith. Courageous Spirit. Action for Justice.

Homily for February 25, 2026

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I would have loved to have been reflecting on the **readings of yesterday**. From Isaiah, "Thus says the Lord; Just as from the heavens, the rain and snow come down...watering the earth, making it fertile and fruitful... **so shall my word be** that goes forth from my mouth...It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it." **What is the Word spoken today?**

Instead of reflecting on this beautiful passage from Isaiah, today we have Jonah...perhaps **this story is good example of the persistence of God's word** seeking to be fruitful in a conflicted world.

The readings this first full week of Lent urge us **to look at how we are living our lives**. The story of Jonah is perhaps the shortest book of the prophets. It is a **didactic story or parable** with a theological message. **Jonah is the Hebrew word for "dove"** and suggests the idea of flight which certainly was the case when God asks Jonah to go to Nineveh. The **Assyrians of Nineveh** were the greatest enemy of Israel. **The Israelites of the post-exilic community**, symbolized by Jonah, had an **intolerant narrow-minded, nationalism** that wanted to **exclude non-believers** from God's mercy and concern. **(This sounds a bit like white, Christian, nationalism to me;** excluding the foreigner, threatening those who are different) **The author of Jonah** was trying to tell the Israelites that they had **no monopoly on God's love and forgiveness**. **The God of the Jews was equally** the God of the Gentiles.

In the **first Chapter of the book**, Jonah, the dove, flees from God who asks him to **go to Nineveh** and **preach against** their wickedness. **We know the story** – Jonah ends up being thrown overboard on the ship going to Tarshish. **He acknowledged to those on board that he was fleeing from the Lord**. Once Jonah was thrown into the sea, the **sea's raging abated** and **all on board** made vows to the Lord.

God was not done with Jonah. A huge fish swallowed him up and spewed him out on the shores of Nineveh. **Again**, Jonah was asked by the Lord to announce God's message to the people.

For their wickedness, the large city was to be destroyed. The people including the king put on sack cloth and ashes and **repented** of their sinfulness. God, in **God's gracious mercy**, when he saw that they repented of their evil ways, forgave the people. **God's Word achieved the end for which it was sent**.



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If we were to read the last chapter of the book of Jonah, we would see **how angry Jonah became at God** for not carrying out God's threat to destroy Nineveh. **God tries to convert Jonah.** (I leave it to you to read this part of the story.) "Our God is merciful, slow to anger, rich in clemency and loathe to punish."

How does God want to use us to show God's forgiveness, love and mercy? Can we see that God's ways **may not be ours?** " **A little bit of humility goes a long way. "A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn."** **God's Word does not return to God void, but shall do God's will.**

In the **Gospel, Jesus tells those looking for a sign** that they need look no further than the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, **so will the Son of Man be to this generation. We may be tempted** to look for signs of God acting in our world. **Jesus is the sign**, one of love and mercy, **healing the poor and standing with** those in need; gracious and forgiving to all **regardless of race, class, culture, and religion.**

While we may not see signs of God and the fruitfulness of God's word today, we can look back and see all the signs of God's love and mercy that we missed and be grateful. Lent is a good time to do this.

Our final fate will be decided, not on riches, power or success with projects and institutions. It will be decided on how we have loved and treated the poor and the stranger in our midst, our own sisters and those who live amongst us.

Lent is also good time to reflect on the Chapter Direction, "Each of our stories writes the narrative of IHM, unfolding again and again the charism especially in spaces longing for liberation."**Where has God's Word, spoken through your life, been fruitful?**

We may also want to **reflect on and be grateful** for the **stance on immigration** released by our Leadership team to the public this week. I close this reflection with a brief section from this statement.

May our faith be deepened during this Lenten time and may the Word of God be fruitful. May it achieve the end for which it was sent.