

3rd Sunday (B)

- Why is it that depending on where you stand, the perspective from which you view something, reality, facts & indeed truth are different?
- Or do you even admit that that is so?
- Some would claim that the facts are clearly there, the truth lies in the facts & truth is true if it's true in itself & I can see the truth of the facts & I must be right & it should be evident to everyone else who can see.
- I'm not questioning truth, but we need to admit that there are different ways of seeing things & my way is not the only way & that I am called to see things sometimes differently – the way someone else sees the same reality.
- Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, offers an example of seeing a situation differently.
- One Sunday morning he was traveling on a subway in New York.
- 'People were sitting quietly - some reading newspapers, some lost in thought, some resting with their eyes closed; it was a calm, peaceful scene.
- Then suddenly, a man & his children entered the subway car.
- The children were so loud & rambunctious that instantly the whole climate changed. 'The man sat down next to me & closed his eyes, apparently oblivious to the children who were yelling, throwing things, even grabbing people's papers. It was very disturbing & yet, the man sitting next to me did nothing.
- 'It was difficult not to feel irritated.
- I could not believe that he could be so insensitive as to let his children run wild like that & do nothing about it, taking no responsibility at all.
- It was easy to see that everyone else on the subway felt irritated, too.
- So finally, with what I felt was unusual patience & restraint, I turned to him & said, "Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you couldn't control them a little more?"
- 'The man lifted his gaze as if to come to a consciousness of the situation for the first time & said softly, "Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think, & I guess they don't know how to handle it either".'
- Covey reflected on this situation: "Can you imagine what I felt at that moment?
- My paradigm shifted. Suddenly I **saw** differently, I **thought** differently, I **felt** differently. My irritation vanished. I didn't have to worry about controlling my attitude or my behaviour; my heart was filled with the man's pain; feelings of sympathy & compassion flowed freely."
- The first reading from the prophet Jonah & today's Gospel are both about repentance – a change of mind, heart, attitude & the ways of seeing things.
- Jonah is called to preach repentance to the Ninevites, & Jesus begins his public ministry with the call to repentance.
- I like Jonah because I can relate to him a little - he's called & he reluctantly responds to be a prophet to the Ninevites who he didn't like at all.
- He preached repentance, otherwise they would be punished for their sinful way of life, & much to his dismay & even disappointment, they renounced their evil ways.

- God spares the Ninevites & Jonah leaves the city sulking – in fact he fell into a rage & so it continues, the castor-oil plant dies on him & he is more enraged.
- God reprimands Jonah for being upset over the castor-oil plant, but totally oblivious to the fate of some 120,000 Ninevites.
- Jonah must learn to see differently: The Ninevites are not enemies to be destroyed, but misguided people to be saved.
- Jesus began his public ministry with the words, 'Repent, & believe the Good News.' The Greek word for repentance in Mark's gospel is *metanoia*, which means literally 'a change of heart or mind'.
- *Metanoia* is ultimately about a new way of seeing reality.
- *Metanoia* is not about seeing anything different; it is about *seeing* differently, & there are many filters that distort our view of reality.
- There are many reasons why we fail or refuse to see things as they are.
- We may be afraid of change; we may have too much invested in the status quo; we may simply fall prey to ingrained prejudices.
- Jesus, in calling his disciples invites them to see differently, to think outside their narrow sphere of reference – to see with his eyes & to see what needs to be done by us to further God's project for creation.
- We are invited to hear God's call of us to discipleship.
- But how do we hear God's call? What might God be asking of us today?
- To answer this question we need to reflect on our own personal lives.
- We need also to think of the way we relate to other people in our family or local community; however, it is also necessary to think big, to examine our relationship with society as a whole & with the world.
- We are becoming increasingly aware of our responsibilities to all the people who share this planet with us & to the planet itself.
- Jesus is calling us to repent – to adopt a change of heart.
- The prophets of our time are telling us that we must repent as regards our attitude to the earth's limited resources & the ways wealthy nations exploit the poor.
- We have to find a change of heart that affects our way of life, or the very future of the earth as well as the survival in dignity of our poorer brothers & sisters is at risk it's not enough to give the crumbs on the table, but inviting the poor to a share of the world's resources at the table; we are not asked to solve the massive problems of the world on our own, but neither are we to do nothing.
- At least we can pay more attention to the effects of our choices on the world at large & become more aware of what is happening.
- May this Eucharist give us the strength, resources, inspiration & intelligence we need to be converted personally & socially to respond to God's call of us.
- If we listen we can find ourselves linked to the many great people – present day prophets who are working to build a better world, & they are at times more conscious of the way God calls us to be in the world than those who claim explicit faith in God. Jonah was called to see the people of Nineveh differently; Jesus began his ministry with a call to change the way we ***see, think & then act.***