

- Well, all of the readings have pretty much the same theme—the coming of the Kingdom of God...and how to prepare for it.
- First a reading from the book of the prophet Jonah...and the theme of the story is that God is the God of all people... and those who believe in God have the responsibility to spread God’s truth to those who do not yet know Him.
- Jonah announces their impending doom, and the Ninevites repent from sin...and thus are saved...
- ...because God does not want our destruction, but our fidelity... and if we fall, He longs for us to repent and return to him.
- As God says through the prophet Ezekiel: “*‘As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live... ’*” (Eze 33:11 RSV)
- We are each a little Nineveh...we mar the image of God within us with sin and selfishness.
- Most of us, if not all of us, have some sort of nagging difficult-to-defeat sin—a disordered appetite for something we should not have—“dis-ordered” meaning roughly “not in accord with God’s will, and thus out of accord of what is good”.
- For some it’s food...for some it’s sexual...for some it’s abuse of substances, or gossip, holding grudges...etc., etc., etc.
- But, like the Ninevites, God gives each of us a little Jonah within ourselves—our conscience...which constantly calls to us back to God lest we rebel against Him...which is what sin is.
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- People often accuse Catholics of emphasizing “guilt”...but what IS “guilt”?
- Guilt is simply the goading of our conscience...guiding us away from the bad back toward the good. The guilt we feel is often God’s grace leading us back to Him. That feeling of guilt is a good thing.
- Our culture has suppressed good guilt so much that they hardly can tell between right and wrong anymore.

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- Now “conscience” is often misunderstood. We have the tendency to try to rationalize and justify our desires as “conscience” even when they conflict with what God teaches.
- We all have, like in a cartoon, the little devil on one shoulder and the little angel on the other—each whispering into our ears.
- Our conscience is the little angel—and is only true conscience when it is in accord with the theological truth and moral law which God teaches in scripture and through His Church—because what God teaches IS truth... IS righteousness.
- There is no “alternative” truth or righteousness apart from God; He is all truth.
- And, so, we must inform—train—our conscience by knowing the teaching of God—so well outlined in the Catechism of the Church and, of course, in God’s Word from which those teachings come.
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- This is why, with the Archdiocese Vocations Weekend coming up next weekend, I want to encourage you young men to consider the priesthood or the diaconate...for a large part of the duties of the pastors and shepherds of God’s people is to help them form conscience by teaching what is truly good and truly right.
- The world bombards us continually with what it values, and yet much of what it values goes against the teaching of God.
- But...how can that which is against God’s teaching be good?
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- Now a shepherd is to guide and protect the flock entrusted to him; one who does not is no shepherd at all.
- For instance...some took umbrage of some of what I said last week in the homily...but I simply reiterated what has been Church teaching for 2000 years, and is certainly no secret. In fact, the quote to which most exception was taken straight from the Catechism...issued by Pope Saint John Paul, by the way.
- If you want something other than Catholic teaching here, I’m afraid you will be disappointed.

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- “Well...who died and left the Catholic Church in charge?!” Jesus. Or, rather, died, rose again and ascended to Heaven and did so.
- And the job...the duty...of the deacon, the priest and the bishop is to be good watchmen and good shepherds—leading the flock to the good pasture of truth... putting himself in the breach for that truth, leading them to safety as best he can..., and giving up even his life for his sheep if necessary...in imitation of the Good Shepherd.
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- Now, young men...the life of the priest and deacon is not glamorous, often not easy, sometimes painful, and certainly not well-paid—at least here on earth.
- But much more important than his own welfare is the welfare of Christ’s flock. That is what the priest, the deacon, the bishop is to place above all else—especially above personal considerations... especially popularity, which is always a danger.
- After all...who loves his people more—the shepherd who tickles their ears with what they want to hear to be popular and get big collections...or the one who tells them God’s truth like Jonah... that they might know truth, live good lives according to God’s will, repent from sin, and prepare well for eternity?
- And young ladies—while you are not called to be priests and deacons...other than celebrate the sacraments, you can do as much, and even more. Who can say that Mother Teresa or Sr. Faustina has not had more influence on more people than many priests and even many popes? Sisters and nuns are teachers of popes and bishops well before their ordination to priesthood.
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- We all tend—especially young people—to be drawn by the glamour and acclaim and the things of the world.
- But I remember a story a few years ago of a gorgeous, popular, wealthy 20-year-old Brazilian model.
- She had everything that the world looks for—beauty, fame, tons of money...a spectacular future with no end in sight.

- But she contracted a rare disease, and died within a few days...and now, the poor little thing is in the ground...her beauty and fame lost forever.
- And yet the beauty of righteousness before God...the beauty of virtue...the beauty of service to God and our fellow man...those are things which death cannot touch...and the beauty of them lives forever. So you young people, and all...please consider them carefully.
- Thus the message of Paul when we hear him in our second reading:
 - *I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.*
From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,
those weeping as not weeping,
those rejoicing as not rejoicing,
those buying as not owning,
those using the world as not using it fully.
For the world in its present form is passing away.
- Not to neglect our earthly duties, but look most of all to the eternal, and be not be attached to earthly things. Our true home is Heaven, Paul is saying; focus upon that!
- No, it's often not easy. But Peter tells us: “...*though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith... may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1Peter 1:6-7 RSV)*”
- Jesus promises in John's vision of Rev 2:10: “*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*” (Rev 2:10)
- And, of course, He says in the Gospels: “...*he who endures to the end will be saved.*”
- Jesus warns us that His disciples will undergo difficulty, hatred and persecutions from the world. “If they hated me, they will hate you,” He says.
- And yet, He tempers that ominous warning with the assurance of His promise: “*Blessed are you if you do [the things that I have taught you] ...for your reward will be great in Heaven.*”

Reading 1

[Jon 3:1-5, 10](#)

The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying:
"Set out for the great city of Nineveh,
and announce to it the message that I will tell you."
So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh,
according to the LORD'S bidding.
Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;
it took three days to go through it.
Jonah began his journey through the city,
and had gone but a single day's walk announcing,
"Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,"
when the people of Nineveh believed God;
they proclaimed a fast
and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way,
he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them;
he did not carry it out.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (4a) Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your love are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice
and teaches the humble his way.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Reading II
[1 Cor 7:29-31](#)

I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.
From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,
those weeping as not weeping,
those rejoicing as not rejoicing,
those buying as not owning,
those using the world as not using it fully.
For the world in its present form is passing away.

Gospel
[Mk 1:14-20](#)

After John had been arrested,
Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:
"This is the time of fulfillment.
The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel."

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee,
he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea;
they were fishermen.
Jesus said to them,
"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.
He walked along a little farther
and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.
They too were in a boat mending their nets.
Then he called them.
So they left their father Zebedee in the boat
along with the hired men and followed him.