

## Father Dave's Weekly Homily

01/22/12 ..... 3 B

-- Imagine God had asked you 2-3 years ago to go to Sudan in Africa, to speak to their leaders about the persecution of Christians in the south of that country. Or God told you to go to Iran to speak to President Ahmadinejad about how he was treating his people.

-- I would bet you'd want to go in the opposite direction. If so, I think you can understand how Jonah felt when God asked him to go to Nineveh to tell those people of their impending destruction. Nineveh was hardly a friendly place.

-- At first Jonah went west, in the opposite direction God asked him to go. But, of course, we know about the storm, about how he was thrown overboard and swallowed by a big fish, and ended up on shore near the city where he was supposed to preach in the first place.

-- That's where our first reading picks up. Reluctantly, Jonah goes and delivers God's message. And, to his great surprise, they listen! They repent, and God does not punish them. We find out soon afterward that Jonah wasn't pleased, but it didn't matter to our forgiving God.

-- The disciples in the gospel seemed to react quite differently to Jesus' call. They picked up and followed him right away. Something about that call must have been compelling.

-- Of course, they may have heard of Jesus and his works. They may have even heard him preach before. We don't know. But when the call came, it was urgent—right now... no waiting to decide.

-- There's an urgency in Mark's gospel, just as there is in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The time is short. In fact, St. Paul believed that Christ would come any day now. That belief is behind his advice to them about marriage.

-- As it turns out, Paul was wrong about the second coming of Christ. But he was right about the passing nature of all things. We don't live on

this earth forever. And all earthly relationships will be transformed in eternity.

-- And he was also right in the sense that the Lord's call to us is urgent. He wants us to follow him, not to hem and haw around for weeks, months and years deciding whether his message is worth buying into.

-- There are many times when we are like Jonah, afraid of the challenge, tempted to run away. Perhaps we even try to do so. But God's call is compelling, and he leads us back to where he wants us to be.

-- There are also times when we are discouraged. This week we celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Many people who had high hopes 30-40 years ago for Christian unity have become discouraged. It's not as easy to achieve as we first thought.

-- But, first of all, it is God's work, not ours. We must pray for our openness to God's work. And it comes on God's timetable, not ours. God simply asks us to be faithful, to persevere, and leave the results to him.

-- On occasion, God's work is done in new and amazing ways, often so amazing that we find it hard to believe or accept. God's grace can be seen in the people we least expect. We only have to open ourselves to God's grace, wherever it may show itself.

-- God never ceases to call his people to new life. He invites us to greater unity as his followers. He challenges us to find new ways to promote the respect of the life of all human beings, from conception to natural death, in our society. God's work will be done on earth.

-- The only question that confronts us is this: Will we answer the call to cooperate with God's saving work on earth?