

Forgotten Gifts

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle A

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Luke 11:29-32

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah.

Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment, the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, in this Lenten season, I want to draw closer to you. I believe that you truly became one of us to save us as an act of love beyond all human understanding. I know I can count on you to carry me through each day. I know that in all circumstances you are with me. I want to love you more than myself and say "yes" to your will in every moment. I trust totally in your grace. Thank you, Lord! This Lent, I want to learn to love you more, as you deserve. I want to be the person you want me to be.

Petition: Lord Jesus, help me to re-discover all the gifts you have given me and help me to use them to bear fruit.

1. Re-Discovering the Familiar: We all know the saying, "familiarity breeds contempt." In today's Gospel, Jesus' contemporaries were in that situation regarding Jesus himself. He had already worked miracles, and his preaching and holiness of life were totally exceptional. Yet, some people were not satisfied, and Jesus rebukes them for seeking more signs. It's all too easy for us to fall into this same attitude with our faith. Instead of appreciating the riches conserved in the tradition of the Church, many still look for extraordinary signs. The Beatitudes, or the Gospel accounts of Jesus raising people from the dead might seem boring, but private revelations and possible apparitions capture our imagination. Lent is a good time to go back to the basics, and re-encounter Our Lord in the Scripture and in the Mass, as if for the first time.

2. The "Sign of Jonah" Is a Sign for Me: Despite his harsh tone in the Gospel, Jesus actually does promise to give them a sign – "the sign of Jonah." By this he means his death and resurrection, as he explains in the Gospel according to Matthew (12:40). There could, in fact, be no greater sign than this and the celebration of the Pascal Mystery is the true climax to which the period of Lent is directed. The penitential character of these forty days can seem to belie their true meaning as a season of hope. Really, we're purifying ourselves to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ!

3. Sharing Our Blessings: Jesus says to his listeners that they will be judged because they are not appreciating the gift they have before their eyes. It's an invitation for us not only to appreciate all that we have received in the Church, but also to share it with others. The truths of our faith, which we commemorate and re-live in Lent and Easter, are not intended for us alone but for all humanity. Whether or not that message gets out depends on each one of us. What are we doing to share the true meaning of Lent and Easter with those around us?

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, help me to appreciate the great gifts you've given me in the Church – your presence in the Eucharist and in sacred Scripture, the sacraments, the testimony of the holy lives of so many saints – and in my own life through the work of your grace in my soul. I don't need any more signs! Help me to share these gifts with the people I encounter by living what I profess – and by having the courage to speak about my faith.

Resolution: Today I will focus on what I am doing when I pray, read the Scripture, or participate in the liturgy. I will raise my level of awareness as if I were doing it for the first time.