**3rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [25th January, 2015]**

READINGS: Jonah 3:1-5, 10 / 1 Cor. 7:29-31 / Mark 1:14-22

THEME: REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Two boys (A and B) are instructed by their respective parents as follows: to boy A, the father said: “go and wash down or else I punish you”; and to boy B, his mother said: “go and wash down, so that we can go to the children’s party”. Punishment is associated with the instruction to boy A, whereas a celebration is associated with the instruction given to boy B.

Similarly, though both the prophet Jonah and our Lord Jesus Christ preached about repentance, they give different reasons why their respective audience must repent. Jonah’s preaching is like the instruction given to boy A. The people of Nineveh were to repent otherwise they would be destroyed within 40 days. Thus, punishment was tied with the preaching of repentance.

On the other hand, the preaching of Jesus Christ is like the instruction given to boy B. We are to repent not so much because of the fear of being punished, but first and foremost because God wants us to enjoy the goodness of his Kingdom. Beloved, imagine the excitement with which a child would go and wash down, if he/she is assured of going out to celebrate with others. Even a reluctant child would readily go and wash down. Similarly, Jesus Christ wants the prospects of the joys of heaven to excite us to readily repent of our sins.

Furthermore, to repent and be forgiven is like washing down. As washing down is an activity by which bodily dirt is cleansed so repentance involves giving up our spiritual dirt, namely our sins. Secondly, as one washes down with water, so Jesus washes away our sins with his precious blood. Thirdly, however, there may be plenty of water, but one may refuse to wash down. Similarly, though the blood of Jesus is more abundant than all the oceans put together, some people may refuse to repent and be washed clean by him.

My prayer is, therefore, that the joys of heaven will always excite us unto repentance, that the precious blood of Jesus will cleanse us of all our sins, and that we will ultimately enjoy the eternal banquet of heaven. Amen!