

HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR B

I'm sure that most people have received some type of mail with "URGENT" stamped on it. Today the prophet Jonah speaks an urgent message to the people of the city of Nineveh. "Forty days more and Nineveh will be destroyed." And the people heard it, repented of their sins and their city was spared.

In the Gospel, Jesus presents an urgent message and calls his Apostles to share in spreading the news: "This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel."

Finally, St. Paul also expresses urgency in his message. "Brothers and sisters, the time is running out." At the time of the writing of First Corinthians, Paul believed that the end of the world and the return of Jesus were going to take



place in his lifetime. Aware that marriage is meant for this world and points to the Wedding Feast of Heaven when Christ will unite Himself with His Bride, the Church, the Apostle says that we should stop living as if this world was the only thing that matters. And he concludes with the sobering words: "The world in its present form is passing away."

Prophetic urgency. That is precisely what St. John Paul II presents to us in Theology of the Body. His powerful catechetical instructions are indeed prophetic, administering the antidote to a sexually saturated society. If we want to know what should be most sacred to us, look at the other side of the coin, so to speak, and see what is being profaned: the dignity of each human person, the beauty of marriage, and the centrality of the family as the basic unity of every society.

Scripture teaches us that every human being is made in the image of God. Therefore, every human person, every "body" is sacred. In one of his talks John Paul said, there "are works of art whose subject is the human body in its nakedness" which help us see "the whole personal mystery of man. In contact with these works... we learn in a way that nuptial meaning of the body which corresponds to, and is the measure of 'purity of heart.' But the Pope continues, "There are also works of art... which arouse objection... not because of their object, since the human body in itself always has its inalienable dignity – but because of the quality or way of its reproduction, portrayal and artistic reproduction." (TOB 63:5)

Simply stated, pornography presents human beings as objects for an individual's self-gratification. And to every person, especially parents of children, teens and younger children, "Do you know how readily available pornography is on the computers in your homes?"

One of the central Scriptural references in all of St. John Paul's Theology of the Body is found in the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians: "Husbands love your wives as Christ loves his bride, the church." The union of husband and wife in Christian marriage is so sacred that it is to reflect the love that Jesus has for the Church. And what are the characteristics of Christ's love? His love is free, total, faithful and fruitful. It follows naturally, then, that the love of a husband and wife is to be free, total, faithful and fruitful.

Finally, we come to the prophetic urgency regarding the family, the basic unit of every society. "In matrimony and in the family a complex of interpersonal relationships is set up-married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation and fraternity-through which each human person is introduced into the 'human family' and into the 'family of God,' which is the Church. The human family, disunited by sin, is reconstituted in its unity by the redemptive power of the death and Resurrection of Christ. Christian marriage, by participating in the salvific efficacy of this event, constitutes the natural setting in which the human person is introduced into the great family of the Church." (*Letter to Families*, 15)

Prophetic urgency. When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah, they repented of their sins and changed their hearts. The teachings of Christ and the Church are far greater than the words of Jonah. How well are we listening?



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