

12 October 2026: Monday of the 28th week in Ordinary Time

[Luke 11:29-32](#)

Homily

The prophet Jonah was sent by God to the pagans in the city of Nineveh. But he did not want the mission, and fled to the city of Tarshish. This, as we know, led him - and all his companions - into a terrible storm. In the midst of this storm, he recognized his sin and agreed - he even asked - to be thrown into the sea to appease God's anger. He then began an experience of solitude, symbolized by the time he spent in the belly of a big fish, before finally beginning his mission to preach a message of repentance. However, it was impossible for him to understand that a pagan city could be converted to God; and when it was, he was upset. As we know from the rest of the story, God will make him understand, through the image of the plant that grows in one day and dies the next, that He, God, has the same merciful love for the pagan city of Nineveh as He does for the people of Israel.

This is what Jesus is referring to when he tells the scribes and Pharisees, whom he calls a '*pervered generation*', that the only sign that will be given to them will be the sign of Jonah. We should not see this simply as an allusion to the fact that Jonah's three days in and out of the whale's belly are symbolic of Jesus' three days in the tomb and his resurrection. There is more to Jesus' words than that, for He also tells them about the conversion of the people of Nineveh and about the Queen of Sheba, who came to listen to Solomon's wisdom. Jesus' message is universal. Salvation is for all nations.

A Father of the Church, Saint Peter Chrysologus (who was bishop of Ravenna in Italy at the beginning of the 5th century) has a very fine commentary on this text, in which he shows how the story of Jonah was fulfilled in Jesus. He even goes so far as to say that Jesus fled from the face of God, just like Jonah, quoting the beautiful text from Philippians 2. (*He who was equal to God left that divine condition to become one of us.... The Father raised Him up and His message spread to the ends of the earth*).

We are often like the scribes and Pharisees, asking God to give us signs. We are also like Jonah, refusing to go to those of our brothers and sisters whom we consider to belong to another category, another group, another class. So, God sometimes takes us and brings us through a storm -- an experience of loneliness or perhaps personal failure. Let us then try to be like the Queen of Sheba, who did not hesitate to set out on her journey, leaving the beaten track of our certainties - or our illusions - to listen to the wisdom of God - this wisdom which is constantly offered to us in listening to and mediating the Word of God, but also in listening to our sisters and brothers.

So we always return to the heart of Jonah's sign: there is no fullness of life without a passage through death. We must always die to ourselves so that Christ can be born - and always be born again - in us.

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

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