

3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time “Time is running out!”

Bishop Frank Schuster

Who here has ever pulled an all-nighter to get a project or assignment done on time? I think most of us have had that experience at some point in life. I remember back to my days in seminary that I had a big paper due the next morning. The assignment was given to us weeks before, but I procrastinated like so many of us do at times, especially when we are young. Faced with an immovable deadline, I worked all night on it. The paper was finally finished to my satisfaction at around 5 AM. Since the class the paper was for didn't start until 8 AM, I figured I could get a couple hours of sleep. Big mistake. I ended up waking up at 9 AM to the horror that I slept through the class! I quickly jumped into some clothes and ran to the classroom building with my paper in hand, catching the teacher as he was leaving the building. I apologized profusely, explained what happened, how I worked all night, accidentally overslept, and had every good intention of being at class that morning. The teacher looked at me with a smile, gave me a wink and said, “Schuster, the road to hell is paved with good intentions”. Epic fail but a good lesson! I learned that day if I have a big assignment due that I should make every effort to get it done well in advance of the deadline. It is a lesson we all learn at some point. My friends, God is trying to teach us this lesson in our readings this Sunday.

Jonah tells the people of Nineveh in our first reading, “forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed”. How about that for a deadline? St. Paul tells us in our second reading, “I tell you brothers and sisters that time is running out.” Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading, “This is the time of fulfillment.” Not a week from now, not a year from now, this is the time of fulfillment, right now. He says, “The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel”. It is as if the Church is trying to tell us this weekend, stop procrastinating, time is short, and act now before it is too late!

I believe this is a very good reminder in the spirit life. You see, we all have had to deal with deadlines either at work or at school. What we don't do so well at times is seeing the forest through the trees. For instance, I think most young people hopefully figure out, what good is it to get an “A” in school but get an “F” in life? Hopefully most adults eventually figure out, what good is it to get a promotion at work but end up failing our family in the process? Furthermore, what good is it to prosper financially in our society but end up spiritually impoverished? You know, Mother Teresa once provocatively told a British Reporter, “The spiritual poverty of the Western World is much greater than the physical poverty of our people.” How about that? She continues, “You, in the West, have millions of people who suffer such terrible loneliness and emptiness. They feel unloved and unwanted. These people are not hungry in the physical sense, but they are in another way. They know they need something more than money, yet they don't know what it is. What they are missing, really, is a living relationship with God.”¹ How about that for wisdom? Saint Augustine gave us the same insight at the beginning of his spiritual autobiography, the Confessions. Saint Augustine after years trying to find happiness in the world, and failing epically time and time again, finally concluded that God made us for himself and so our hearts are restless until they rest in him.

<https://patch.com/california/lakeforest-ca/bp--the-day-mother-teresa-told-me-your-poverty-is-gree85a671097>¹

And so, the Church is offering a reminder this weekend that we don't have all the time in the world. How do we begin? Jesus tells us that we begin by repenting and believing the Gospel. As many of you know, the English word "Repent" isn't as revealing as the original Greek word here. The word is *Metanoia*. "Meta" means transcend, and "nous" means mind. And so "repent" in this sense is a challenge for us to transcend our current way of thinking and to see ourselves and the world around us with the hermeneutic of the Kingdom, through Jesus' eyes.

Look, no one has ever made a positive change in their life without first changing their vision, recognizing what isn't working in their life. We need to allow God to change our hearts so we can envision the change that needs to happen. We need to believe in that new vision enough so to do it, even suffer for it. That is what *metanoia* means. The Holy Spirit will inspire us and gives us all the grace we need to live our vocations, but if we don't change our mindsets, believe in Jesus' vision for us, and act on that worldview, we will just continue to spin our wheels in this life.

I therefore think it is helpful that the Church rolls out readings like we have this Sunday every so often to remind us of Jonah's words to the people of Nineveh, "forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed", to remind us of what St. Paul tells us in our second reading, "I tell you, brothers and sisters, that time is running out", and to remind us of Jesus' words in our Gospel reading, "This is the time of fulfillment." Not a week from now, not a year from now, this is the time of fulfillment. "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel". My friends, ask yourself what does Jesus' invitation to *metanoia* mean for you right now, today? What does this message mean for your family and your priorities? The invitation this Sunday is to stop procrastinating, get moving, embrace the vision of the Kingdom, embrace the vision God has for you, and never quit. The clock is ticking. With God's grace, it is time to pass the test called life.