

In this period of "Christmas Joy" we pray you will discover a new awareness of God's Word and God's love and presence in your lives through these reflections.



Our Lady of the Fields Church
Scriptural Review & Reflections
Saturday & Sunday Jan 6 & 7, 2018

For more information on any of the parish Faith Enrichment programs contact the Evangelization and Faith Formation Office & Staff or Dr. Little at tlittle@olfparish.com

Paul is definitely NOT an image of Jonah

One of the interesting illusions of Acts chapter 27 is the role of the storm at sea and the comparison with Jonah's story (Jonah 14:5) to Paul's. Jonah is cast into the sea because he is running from the Lord and the responsibilities that the Lord had given to him to preach God's word. Paul, on the other hand, was on ship precisely to preach God's word in the capital of the world, Rome! Paul was not running away, in fact, he was most anxious to get to his final destination!

The idea the church as an image of a "little ship" was probably not yet used widely in Christian thought. Still, Luke had it in his thinking, already. The storms do not imply that the journey is futile. They merely show the world fighting back against Jesus claim that the world is His, as Lord of all creation. But, as we all know, the powers of the world will do what they can to resist their Lord. So, the shipwreck in Malta is a clear opportunity to see the difference between Jonah and Paul and how they use the opportunities that the shipwreck provides them.

In Paul's case the new creation is coming together and no power of this world can stop him. Paul comes to Rome, a bit bedraggled then he would have liked, with a Gospel which will truly flourish and which no power can stop. This is the work of the Lord – Paul will stand before Caesar to call Rome to a new opportunity in God!

The Acts of the Apostles: A Book for Disciples: Acts Ch. 27: To Rome

The Jews were not (except for some special fishermen) a great seafaring race. They left that to the Egyptians and the Phoenicians and the Greeks. For the Jews, the sea was truly a monster! Yes, the one God had made it, just as he made everything else. And as a creature it was God's, and it did His bidding. But still the sea was seen as a dark force. It was a power in its own right and a place from which dark powers could emerge suddenly and without warning. Paul, unusual for a Jew, was a seasoned traveler and was under no illusions about what might await him on the voyage to Rome from one of its furthest outposts. He had lived on the sea often. He knew that the sea was still potentially a great enemy while believing that all enemies had been defeated already by Jesus the Messiah.

The reader with an alert biblical memory may be thinking "where have I heard something like this before?" And the answer, which Luke picks up, is the story of Jonah running away to avoid having to go and preach in the Imperial city of Nineveh. And when storms came the sailors did what was normal - they threw the cargo into the sea. At that point Jonah was in the hold fast asleep and they woke him and ended up throwing him overboard with the cargo. And of course this is Luke's point - Paul is no Jonah. He will not run nor is he cargo to be thrown out. Instead in a dramatic reversal he tells the ships company to cheer up. He is on a mission that no storm will interrupt. He is to preach to Caesar!