

August 8, 2021 Homily given by Deacon Tony

Gospel John chapter 6 verses 41-51

Has anyone here ever read the Bible cover to cover? It can be a daunting task if you don't have a bible companion handbook or handbooks beside you to understand all that is going on behind the scenes. One thing though must be made perfectly clear at the onset before you even break open the binding and it comes to us from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It states that, "the Bible is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and affirms for us what is necessary for the sake of our salvation." And that is going to be our jump off point for today, that the Bible "affirms for us what is necessary for the sake of our salvation."

Every time I get a chance to work with the 9th graders, I always bring up the story of Jonah from the Old Testament. Because for me it stands as a litmus test of what they believe.

The story begins as Jonah is asked by the Lord to go to Nineveh and preach to the people because of their wicked ways. Jonah though, has different ideas, so he high tails it aboard a ship to get out of doing the Lords work. The ship sets sail and while at sea the wind picks up, the waves begin to crash into the boat The boat is on the verge of breaking up. So, the crew in desperation, throw all the cargo overboard to lighten the load, to no avail. Now fearful all is lost they cast lots to see who has brought this calamity upon them and Jonah is outed. They discover Jonah is fleeing from the Lord!!! So, Jonah says throw me overboard to calm the sea and they do. As Jonah hits the water a large fish sent by the Lord swallows him whole. We have always surmised the fish was a whale. And Jonah is in the belly of the whale for three days

and three nights until the Lord commands the fish to spit him out onto the shore of Nineveh. Now Jonah goes forth to preach to the Ninevites against their wicked ways.

How coincidental that just this past June a diver, hunting lobsters, off the coast of Cape Cod, is swallowed whole by a Humpback whale. Only later to be spit out, as this man then goes on to late night television to talk about his experience. Ah, but I digress.

Before I give the 9th graders a chance to process all we spoke about concerning Jonah and whether they believe it to be true or not I give them one more additional scripture passage from the New Testament to think on. A passage where Jesus speaks and it's entitled, "The Demand for a Sign" and I'm going to read it to you from Matthew chapter 12.

Jesus said to them, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the Prophet. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. At the judgement, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and there is something greater than Jonah here."

Yes, there is. There is something far greater than Jonah here and it comes to us from what Jesus tells us in today's Gospel.

That he is the living bread come down from Heaven. And whoever eats this bread will live forever. And the bread that he gives is his flesh for the life of the world!

Six different times Jesus tells us this in this chapter. SIX

I hope and pray that every human being will come to accept this truth. That what we believe as Catholics. That upon this altar at mass,

Jesus is re-membered as the unbloodied sacrifice necessary for our the sake of our salvation. Here and upon every altar around the world at Holy Mass.

It is not a re-enactment of what happened at the Last Supper.

JOHN CHAPTER 6

Written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

Delivered by Jesus, the Son of God

Ordained by Our Heavenly Father

To affirm for us what is necessary for the sake of our salvation!

