

Homily based on the readings from October 13, 2025 (Romans 1.1-7;
Luke 11.29-32)

It is an interesting coincidence that at least one of the readings on Columbus Day almost always mentions the Prophet Jonah. At a basic level, these two men are both known for their nautical journeys – although that is essentially where the similarities end. While Columbus was engaging in a courageous voyage of discovery, Jonah was actively running away – from his past life, from his obligations and responsibilities, and above all from God himself.

This year, as it happens, we do not hear the original narrative from the Book of Jonah. (As you may recall, that came up last week.) Instead, we get a somewhat cryptic remark from Jesus himself:

This generation is an evil generation;
it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it,
except the sign of Jonah.

Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites,
so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

To many people at the time – and even to us today – this comment might be a bit confusing. While there is not much in common between Jonah and Columbus, there is even less between Jonah and Jesus. Even though Jonah eventually accepted his divinely appointed mission – preaching the word of God to the people of Nineveh – he did so only after devoting all his energy to attempting to escape. In contrast, Christ not only embraced the ministry he was assigned, but did so recognizing that its inevitable conclusion would be a brutal and painful death.

Fortunately for all of us, we are not limited to a single account of Christ's words and actions. In a different conversation, recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus more clearly explains the connection between himself and the Prophet Jonah:

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

In other words, as he often does, Jesus is actually foreshadowing his own death and Resurrection. What he is saying, in essence, is that if people cannot accept him for who he truly is, then they will never be able to accept his teachings.

The important point for us to take away here is that the *principles* of Christianity can never be separated from the *person* of Jesus Christ. For the past three or four centuries, ever since the so-called *Age of Enlightenment*, many self-professed philosophers have attempted to develop a moral framework that is religiously neutral – that is independent of the revealed truths of Christianity. Most of the horrific events of modern history – from the gulags of Soviet Russia to the death camps of Nazi Germany – demonstrate the futility of this project. As Christians, we *know* that belief does not stem from an abstract set of

moral precepts, but from an intimate, personal relationship with our Risen Lord and Savior. It was that relationship, in fact, which Jonah sought to flee. It was that relationship which inspired Columbus to set out into the unknown, to seek out new lands and new peoples. It is that relationship which compels all of us to gather together, day after day, to kneel in *worship* and *prayer* before the altar of the Lord.