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Wednesday's Gospel: The Ninevites and Queen of the South

Gospel for Wednesday in the 1st
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk* 11:29-32)

When the crowds were increasing,
Jesus began to say,

“This generation is an evil
generation; it seeks a sign, but no
sign shall be given to it except the
sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a
sign to the men of Nineveh, so will
the Son of man be to this generation.
The queen of the South will arise at
the judgment with the men of this

generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

Commentary

Today we read some harsh words from our Lord. Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem. During the trip, many people welcome the Gospel message with their heart opened by faith, but many others also openly reject it. Our Lord's words are addressed to the latter group.

Jesus reminds those listening to him of two stories. First, that of Jonah, son of Amittai (cf *Jon* 1:1). This Old Testament figure has captivated the imagination of popular piety down through the ages, with the amazing story of the prophet who was swallowed by a whale and then thrown onto dry land.

Jonah was sent to the people of Nineveh to urge them to convert, just as Jesus was sent to announce the Gospel message to the Jewish people. The Ninevites listened to the prophet and converted. But it wasn't clear how those listening to Jesus' message would react, and it remains to be seen how we ourselves react.

The second story, about the Queen of the South (cf. *1Kgs* 10:1-13), stresses the same idea. The first book of Kings narrates that "when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she

came to test him with hard questions.” Despite her distrust, the Queen listened to Solomon with an open mind and recognized in him the wisdom given to him from above.

Our Lord tells us today that we have to be vigilant in order to recognize him in different circumstances. God’s way of presenting himself is not always obvious. But if we know how to listen like the Ninevites and be attentive like the Queen of the South, we will surely recognize who Jesus is when he speaks to us.

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