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Monday's Gospel: "No sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah"

Gospel for Monday in the 28th
Week of Ordinary Time, 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

“This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign.” Our Lord reproaches the people not because they are asking for a sign. The Old Testament is filled with signs that show God’s care for his people: the crossing of the Red Sea, the tablets of the Law, the ark of the covenant, etc.

These signs are good. Jesus calls the crowds an evil generation because their hearts are hardened, because they are not willing to listen, because pride has blinded them. And therefore they are unable to recognize Him through the signs He has done. Specifically, the most recent one: the healing of the man possessed by a demon (cf. *Lk* 11:14-23).

That is why our Lord tells them that the only sign that will be given to them is the sign of Jonah. Jonah was sent to urge the people of Nineveh, the great Assyrian city, to convert: “Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he cried, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’” (*Jon* 3:4). And the people heeded the prophet’s call to conversion: “they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.” (*Jon* 3:5). They had a sensitive

heart and were willing to open themselves to God's word, even though they were far from Him.

Jesus asks the people to believe in Him because of the authority with which He speaks and the signs He is working.

Jesus asks us to have a heart open to God's voice. May we know how to listen to Him when He speaks to us through his words or through another person or through a situation we are going through. May we know how to discover his voice when He guides us on the path to holiness.

We can rely on all the strength of the Holy Spirit, who, when He finds a willing heart, pours out his gifts and leads us along the paths of God.

Jesus asks us to trust in and live by his words, as our Lady did. Just before this episode we read that

precious praise of Jesus to his Mother: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (cf. *Lk* 11:28). That was our Lady’s attitude throughout her whole life. As Pope Benedict XVI said so eloquently: “The *Magnificat* – a portrait, so to speak, of Mary’s soul – is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the Word of God. Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God, how with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God; the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God.”^[1]

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^[1] Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 41

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