



23. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 34: “True Prophets in the Service of Jesus”

Today’s reading (Jonah 3:1–10) is a source of great joy on our Lenten journey. An entire city, along with its king, takes the prophet Jonah’s warning seriously. So there are indeed situations in which people turn from their evil ways. The people of Nineveh did penance when the king issued the proclamation:

“And he made proclamation and published through Nin'evah, ‘By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them cry mightily to God; yea, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may yet repent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we perish not?’ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.” (vv. 7–10)

How would people take this today? Can we imagine a prophet arising to warn of an impending catastrophe and actually succeeding in bringing about the complete conversion of a nation, a city, a town, or at least a Catholic parish? How would such a prophet be treated today? He would certainly be ridiculed—and that is to mention only the mildest form of rejection. He would likely be treated like someone who warns of an impending fire but is then blamed for it.

Generally speaking, prophets did not tend to enjoy recognition among the people. Often, they had to announce what displeased God about their actions, point out the sins that disrupted their relationship with Him, and show the way toward sincere conversion.

The Ninevites’ reaction was entirely different, showing us that things can indeed turn out otherwise. At the end of Jonah’s story, God teaches him a lesson so that he too may be more deeply converted and better understand divine goodness.

Prophetic warnings are not threatening gestures intended to instill terror. On the contrary, they are absolutely necessary, for they reveal the consequences of doing wrong. It would be irresponsible not to point this out out of human respect. Suppose we know of a deadly path where mines and hidden traps have been laid, but we do not warn those about to set out on it for fear of their reaction.

That is how difficult it is for true prophets. And in their case, they not only recognize the dangers from their own perspective, but they are commissioned by the Lord to warn of them. God wants to preserve people from misfortune, but if they are unwilling to listen, He will have to resort to the last means by letting them feel the consequences of their evil ways.

I ask the question again: how are such warnings received today? Some even come to us from the highest authorities. In various apparitions, the Virgin Mary has conveyed serious warnings. One of the most significant is that of Fatima (Portugal), where she appeared to three little shepherds and entrusted a message to them. Everyone can read it in detail and see that, unfortunately, what the Virgin warned of came to pass: that Russia would spread its errors (referring to communism) if the antidotes she recommended were not sufficiently applied.

Evidently, this is what happened, because to this day many parts of the world suffer under communism and, above all, people remain in danger of adopting its erroneous ideology.

Just as in Nineveh, the decisive purpose of all true prophecy is to bring people back to God. Furthermore, we learn that we can offer our own path of conversion to the Lord on behalf of others, interceding for them before God.

In today's Gospel (Jn 7:32–39), Jesus invites us to drink from the water of life so that we too may become witnesses to the true source. Some of His listeners were inclined to believe in the Lord. The invitation He proclaimed publicly on the most solemn day of the feast moved the people. He spoke to them of the rivers of living water that would flow from within those who believed in Him. It was a prediction about the Spirit who would come when people believed in the Son of God.

The same thing happens to this very day: when the heavenly Father draws us to recognize Jesus as Lord and believe in Him, the Spirit of God is poured out upon us and seeks to shape our entire lives according to the divine will. We ourselves become witnesses to this process, and to the extent that we allow ourselves to be transformed by Him, the Holy Spirit can also act through us and reach other people.

Listening to the Lord is the supreme wisdom. When He speaks, we never need to question whether it is an authentic message or whether the speaker is truly a prophet. If we pay close attention, we will realize that Jesus was already speaking through Jonah to

call people to conversion, and He was manifesting Himself in every prophet who called people to return to God. All of them foreshadowed Him and made Him present. But on Mount Tabor, the heavenly Father specifically points us to His Son: *“This is my beloved Son; listen to him”* (Mt 17:5). That is what it is all about.

The essence of today’s meditation is to listen to the true prophets who speak in Jesus’ name and, above all, to listen to Him.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-story-of-susanna/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/let-the-one-among-you-who-is-guiltless-be-the-first-to-throw-a-stone-at-her/>