

Father O'Connor's Homily for 21 January 2024  
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – B

Jonah 3: 1-5, 10  
1 Corinthians 7: 29-31  
Mark 1: 14-20

We have a number of words in the English language that come from the classical Greek word for time, **chronos**: “chronology” [a timeline], “chronicle” [an account of how people spent their time], and even “chronic” [which refers to something that lasts for a long time].

**Chronos** tells us what time it is: January 21st at 11:15 AM. Chronos is used in the New Testament 54 times.

The Greeks also had a second word for time, which is **kairos**. **Kairos** refers to another kind of time that we might call “an opportunity.” It tells us what time is for. Like, “It’s time to do your homework.” “It’s time to ‘Repent and believe in the Gospel,’” as Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel. Kairos is used in the New Testament 86 times.

So **chronos** is about “what time it is,” clock time, the moment. And **kairos** is about “what time is for,” the opportunity. And both of these senses of time are found in this Sunday’s Scripture readings.

In the first reading, it was time for the people of Nineveh to do penance and reform their lives. Jonah announced, “Forty days more and Nineveh will be destroyed.” And on the first day of Jonah’s proclamation all the people turned away from their evil ways.

Saint Paul tells us in the second reading that “time is running out” – both clock time and opportunity time. He was warning the Corinthians not to become too attached to the passing things of this world because Christ is coming again.

All of us are going to die one day. The mortality rate for us human beings still stands at 100%. Since early last fall, between Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes, I have been averaging two to three funerals each week.

And it is not just elderly people who die. I know from more than 48 years as a priest that death can come to any one at any time. Here on earth, the clock continues to tick away for us all.

Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

Jesus is speaking of **kairos** when He says, “This is the time...” Now is the time for conversion. Today is the opportunity. And opportunities, as we all know, do not hang around forever. We must seize the moment and grab the day to be prepared for that ultimate moment when our time on earth is finished and we will meet Our Lord face to face.

And Jesus is also inviting us now – as He invited Peter and Andrew, James and John – to be His disciples and carry His message to others. To “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

During this week of prayer for Christian Unity [The Church Unity Octave, 18-25 January each year], we pray that all Christians and all Christian Churches may truly become one in Christ as His faithful disciples. And that we work to nurture this unity – so badly needed in our times right now – by the way we conduct our lives.

So, the next time you look at your watch, don’t just see what time it is – as **chronos**. But also as **kairos** – as an opportunity to use God’s gift of time well as grateful stewards of His bountiful blessings.

And we can’t do that better than we are doing at this very moment: worshipping God the Father through Jesus, His Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the most perfect prayer that there is – the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

**Chronos** and **kairos**: now is the moment... now is the opportunity to “announce the Gospel of the Lord,” to “glorify the Lord by your life.” To use **chronos** and **kairos** in fruitful and timely ways.