

FEBRUARY 17, 2025 VIJAI AMIRTHARAJ

You may have heard the story of a Christian lady, who had to do a lot of travelling for her business. And so, she did a lot of flying. But flying made her nervous, so she always took her Bible along with her to read. And it helped her to relax. One time, she was sitting next to a man, and when the man saw her pull out her Bible, he gave a little chuckle and went back to what he was doing. After a while, he turned to the woman and asked, "You don't really believe all that stuff in there, do you?" The lady replied, "Of course I do. This is the Bible, the Holy Book." He said, "Well, what about that guy that was swallowed by a whale?" She replied, "Oh, Jonah. The Bible says Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and I do believe it." The man asked, "Well, how do you suppose he survived all that time, inside the whale?" The lady said, "Well, I don't really know. I guess when I get to heaven, I will ask Jonah." The sarcastic man said to the woman, "What if Jonah is not in heaven? What if Jonah went to hell?" "In that case," the woman replied, "you ask him when you get there."

Sisters and brothers, most likely, we have all encountered people who need proof. Who need signs to prove something that we claim, to make sure it is correct or acceptable to them. For example, if a believer says, "I can feel the guidance of God in my life," the people who want proof will ask, "How do you know God is guiding you?" In other words, what they're asking is can you prove, or show some sign? The situation was no different in the time of Jesus. People, time and again, came to Jesus, and asked for a sign. As we read in John 4:48, to a royal official Jesus complained, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." Jesus was not for satisfying people's demands, for signs and proofs.

Likewise, in the story that Jesus told, about the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man asked Abraham in paradise to send a sign to his brothers, to warn them. But Abraham answered, they have Moses and the prophets, they should listen to them. Now oftentimes, people who want signs want them for some other purpose, that has nothing to do with deepening of their faith. In the case of the Pharisees, we are told their motive was to test him. Some could be seeking signs, in order to mask their insecurity. Or to hide their lack of real faith. If we really look around, everything speaks of God, and God's love for us. The heavens proclaim the glory of God, and "The firmament shows forth the word of God's hands," we read in Psalm 18.

On the road, we need signs only if we don't know which way to go. But we serve a Lord who himself is the way, the truth, and the life. So, our call is not to look for signs and proofs about things, but to collaborate with God, to build a world of love and friendship. This is a good message for us, especially as we celebrate Family Day, here in Canada, today. Family is where we learn first to love, and to be loved. Family is where we learn first what it means to belong. And once we have a strong foundation in love, in belonging, through our families, then we can become instruments of God's love in the world.

Our first reading today speaks of how jealousy, and envy destroys a relationship, and how it drives Cain to kill his one brother, Abel. Unfortunately, many families today are faced with broken relationships. Envy, jealousy, among siblings and many other family members. So, today we pray for a deeper faith, that goes beyond seeking signs and proofs. And we pray for healing, love, and patience and understanding in our families. Amen.