

2 MARCH

- 1 The story of Jonah and the whale is found in the Old Testament. It is probably best read as a parable - a story with a message.
- 2 God spoke to Jonah: *"Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city."* "No way," thought Jonah. *"It's not for me to go to the capital city of the Assyrians, our hated enemies."* Jonah boarded a ship that would go in the opposite direction. Out to sea, a severe storm blew up. Each sailor prayed to his god - they were about to drown. Jonah came forward: *"It's my fault you're in this trouble; the storm will stop if you throw me overboard."* Reluctantly they did, and a great fish swallowed him whole. Jonah had three days to think about himself, and then the fish spat him out. Where? On the shore near Nineveh!
- 3 God spoke to him a second time: *"Jonah, go to Nineveh."* This time he obeyed. He walked into that great city and said: *"God's message is that this city will be destroyed in 40 days' time because you live in a wicked way."*
- 4 What a surprise for Jonah that the people really listened to him. Word even reached the king. They all took the message seriously and turned away from all the wrong they had been doing, and God spared the city.
- 5 What was Jonah's reaction? He was angry with God and said: *"That's why I ran away. I knew you'd be kind and merciful - that's the way you are."* The cold-hearted Jonah sulked; he'd wanted to see the foreigners and their city destroyed. Jonah was only concerned about himself.
- 6 He sat outside the city in the burning heat of the sun. He was glad that God had made a plant grow to shade his head, but the next day a worm attacked the plant and it died - and so Jonah no longer had any shade from the fierce heat. *"I could die with anger,"* said Jonah. But God said: *"You are angry - not at the loss of a single person - but at the loss of a plant that you only cared for because it was doing something for you. Learn the lesson that I care for and treasure all people - without exception. Learn the lesson that, unlike you, I'm not prejudiced against people who are different from you. Learn the lesson that I'm more kind and merciful than you will ever be. Learn from your experience."*
- 7 *Let's pause for a moment in silence...*
(pause...)

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

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the prayer and education website
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