



Is the Christian called to eat crow? Well, yes! And No! To *eat crow* is an idiom that refers to how hard it is for a person to swallow one's pride, particularly when our obstinate opinion on the truth of a matter has been clearly proven false, much to our own humiliation. Pride is the mother of all sin, and we can easily deceive ourselves about our own righteousness when in fact we are stubbornly and willfully fleeing from the truth of our sinfulness. So in that sense, Jesus calls us to eat crow: to face the bitter truth of our failings, and repent. And admitting the truth can be as tough to swallow as that cawing carrion fowl!

But in another sense, it has *nothing* to do with being humiliated or forced to taste our bitter defeat. Letting go of errant pride and accepting the truth of God -- when embraced in faith and humility (*not* humiliation!) -- actually tastes sweet! This humble admission of our fallibility, frees us to repent -- to turn *away* from the slavery and folly of sin, and *toward* God's mercy, love, and truth. It's about holding our heads *high* as His beloved children; about *letting go* of the shameful attitudes of the past, and living more fully according to His hopes and dreams for us.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus has been proclaimed by his prophet, John the Baptist, who winds up imprisoned and beheaded for His efforts, but glorified by God for all eternity. Jesus preaches His Gospel of repentance and healing and mercy -- breaking open the kingdom of God in our midst. And we only have to look at the cross to know what happened to him!

And yet, by our baptism, we too are called to repent, and to follow Him. We too are to pick up the mantle of proclaiming God's eternal rule and healing presence in a world still in the chains of earthly idols and despots and deceivers dragging us off the path of true happiness. Remember the words of St. Paul: "the world in its present form is passing away."



In the Book of Jonah, we encounter a social satire highly critical of the deafness, the blinding pride, the self-aggrandizement, and the ironic lack of compassion that the Israelites had after their own return from exile. It was their pride and hard-heartedness that landed them in exile in the first place. And now it seems they've forgotten the lesson of God's mercy as a gift to *all* peoples.

Jonah was a lousy prophet! He constantly fled from God's commands, winding him up in the belly of a fish until he repented (though half-heartedly). He *hated* God's command to preach repentance to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, Israel's age-old enemy. He felt they *should* die, and that *no one* deserves mercy but the privileged people of Israel.

We too, can get smug or complacent about the rule of God's mercy. Many don't even *seek* it anymore, thinking God is irrelevant to their lives. Others *presume* his mercy *without* repentance: "Oh, God loves me, so why bother with confession and conversion?" Or worse: "I'm pretty good, so there really *is* no such thing as sin or a need for absolution!"



What folly! What pride! What presumption!

Yes, God loves us, but do *we* love *Him*?! Only if we humble ourselves; courageously face up to sin; and *open* our hearts to the *gift* of divine mercy. Failure to repent is a *choice*, and a *rejection* of God's love -- a *denial* that God's kingdom is at hand, while preferring to make *ourselves* idols of our own little corrupt kingdoms.

In receiving a mercy we do not deserve, we are called to show mercy to *others* who may not

deserve it -- including *our* age old enemies! Insofar as we cling to our false pride, then our repentance and mercy are indeed bitter dishes to stomach. But a humble heart, open to God's ways of mercy, finds it the sweetest treat of all.

So together, may we pick up our forks and eat that crow! May we truly "repent, and believe in the Gospel" even if it means losing our big heads and hard hearts, or being nailed to a cross of humble patience! "Teach me your ways, O Lord... in your compassion, love, and kindness, remember me." And may *we* remember *Him* when *we* are called to exert kindness and compassion for others. *Bon appetite!*

