



A weekly reflection by members  
of the Precious Blood Community

**February 25, 2026**

**Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S.**

“Looking for Trouble”



In his book, Make Peace Before the Sun Goes Down, Roger Lipsey documents Thomas Merton’s struggles with Abbot James Fox. Early in the book, there’s an anecdote about Abbot James walking around the monastery at night with a flashlight. I had a flashback to my high school seminary days when the director of seminarians would search the halls and dormitories and even outside the building to make sure all the students were tucked away in their beds, and no one was outside smoking or in the kitchen raiding the cooler for a late-night snack!

Evidently, Abbot James was doing the same thing. One night, he came into the kitchen where one of the brothers was opening the walk-in cooler. When Abbot James turned on the lights in the kitchen, the brother said, “Reverend Father, if you’re looking for trouble, you’re going to find it.”

What are we looking for? The people in today’s gospel were looking for a sign. In his frustration, Jesus tells them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” What are we looking for in this season of Lent? Are we looking to let go of an untruth, a grudge, a grievance we’ve been carrying

for too long? Are we looking for a change of heart towards someone who has hurt us or harmed us?

Or are we looking for trouble? Looking to catch someone doing something wrong or breaking a rule or in a place where they are not supposed to be, especially if that someone is a person with whom we have difficulty or with whom we disagree. There's a lot of that going around these days in politics and in religious circles. Looking for trouble, looking for mistakes, looking for those breaking the rules.

The first reading about Jonah begins, "The Word of God came to Jonah a second time," because the first time Jonah was looking for trouble for Nineveh. He was looking for the destruction of the city because they were his enemy. So, when God told him to go there and convert them, Jonah ran the other way. Until God became his travel agent and booked him for a ride of a lifetime inside some sea creature who spit him up on the shores of Nineveh.

What are we looking for this Lent? Perhaps we might focus on looking for the good in the other rather than the flaws. Look for the best the other has to offer rather than those habits, behaviors, beliefs that rub us the wrong way. One only needs to go to social media to see the folks looking to point out the flaws, the mistakes, and the messes people make. Thomas Merton called one of his earliest books [The Sign of Jonah](#) because, like Jonah, Merton always seemed to be sailing in the opposite direction of his religious superior. He embraced the sign of Jonah because, he wrote, "I find myself traveling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox."

In one way or another, all of us are. May we embrace the sign of Jonah this Lent as we embrace the cross, and rather than looking for trouble, for flaws and failures in others, may we look instead for the tender compassion of our God.

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