



March Bible Tidbits—Books of The Bible #6

A selection of facts and information to help you discover more of the riches about Sacred Scripture. We continue our journey through the books of the Bible. Call Diane at 633-3672 if you have questions or want to know more.

Each month we'll offer you several new tidbits in print and on-line: In print on the reverse side of the OLV Activities Calendar; On-line on OLV's Home Page (ourladyofvictorytallmadge.parishesonline.com),—below the Question of the Week!

We continue our look at the Prophetic Books of the Bible: Hosea, Amos, Joel Obadiah and Jonah

Hosea: From the very personal details in the first three chapters of Hosea, it seems that the author experienced a painful marriage in which his wife proved unfaithful on more than one occasion. His reality of life would lead us to understand the special emphasis that this prophet gives to the tender bond of love between God and Israel and how seriously sin affects the covenant relationship. Hosea's message is grounded in the violations of justice and the oppression of the poor as well as the broken commandments. Hosea calls the people to return to covenant fidelity and obedience to God.

Amos: Amos is not a professional prophet attached to some temple. He was a farmer and herdsman by trade. It was God who told him to prophecy so far away from home. Amos connects the injustice he sees around him to a society bent on wealth and prosperity and forgetful of the true worship of God. His words touch moral failure in every level of society. Amos realizes that God does not stand idly by and watch evil go on. For Amos the political victories of the Assyrians were not accidents of history, but permitted and directed by God to punish Israel.

Joel: The style of this book is very similar to a modern penitential liturgy for the sacrament of penance: the penitents lament their evil state and all their sins; the priests call for repentance and fasting; both together beg God for mercy and forgiveness, and finally, through the blessing of the priests, all are assured of God's forgiving love. It is Joel who calls for a sincere repentance: "Rend your hearts and not your garments; return to the Lord you God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in abiding love" (Joel 2:13).

Obadiah: Obadiah, with only 21 verses, is the shortest book in the Old Testament. No book reaches the peak of anger found in the oracles of Obadiah. The message of Obadiah is aimed totally at the Edomites whose land was on the other side of the Dead Sea. At the same time that the Babylonians captured Jerusalem in 586, the king of Edom took the chance to seize large parts of the southern area of Judah. The final poem of this book looks ahead to a better time when the Lord will return to defeat all of Israel's enemies.

Jonah: This book is unlike any of the other prophetic books. It is a story *about* a prophet. The author knew his audience would *enjoy* the story unlike the audiences of modern times who would . Jonah is a rousing tale about a prophet gone off the deep end, so to speak. The author makes some important points about prophecy and the nature of God without ever losing his sense of humor. Jonah becomes a perfect character for the discussion of whether God can in fact use a prophet to bring good news to pagan nations. And the lessons are clear: God's plan will not be thwarted even by the negative "righteousness" of his prophet; and the universal love of God even for Gentiles.