

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A
Sunday, January 26, 2020
Readings & Background

This Sunday's Readings

First Reading

Isaiah 8:23-9:3

The people in darkness have seen a great light.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 27:1,4,13-14

The Lord is our refuge, our light, our salvation.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17

Paul urges the community at Corinth to be united
as people baptized in Christ's name.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 4:12-23

(shorter form Matthew 4:12-17)

Jesus begins to preach in Galilee and calls his first disciples.



Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel describes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. ***In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (called the Synoptic Gospels)***, Jesus' public ministry begins after his baptism by John the Baptist and after his retreat to the desert where he was tempted by the devil. When Jesus returns from the desert, he hears that John has been arrested.

The first part of today's Gospel places Jesus' ministry in the context of the writings of the prophet, Isaiah. ***Matthew wants to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies given to the people of Israel, and he refers to Isaiah to do so.*** Isaiah says that the Messiah will begin his ministry in Galilee, the land of the Gentiles. When Jesus begins to preach in Galilee, Matthew points to his ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

When Jesus called his first disciples, **the Gospel tells us that the fishermen (Peter and Andrew, James and John) dropped everything to follow Jesus immediately. Yet this Gospel tells us little about the prior experience that the fishermen had of Jesus.**

Did they know him? Had they heard him preach? What kind of person must Jesus have been to invoke such a response? We can imagine that Jesus was a powerful presence to elicit a response as immediate and complete as these first disciples gave.

The Gospel concludes with a description of the ministry that Jesus begins in Galilee. ***Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God with his work. He teaches in the synagogue and preaches the kingdom.*** His ability to cure people's diseases and illness is a sign of the kingdom. In Jesus' ministry, we already begin to see the Kingdom of God among us.

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Family Connection

Gospel Reading

Matthew 4:12-23

(shorter form Matthew 4:12-17)

Jesus begins to preach in Galilee and calls his first disciples.

Family Connection

Today's Gospel tells us little about the background of these fishermen, their work, and their families. In today's Gospel, ***we are simply told that James and John left their father, Zebedee, in the boat and followed Jesus.***

Some details about the families of these first followers of Jesus are found later in Matthew's Gospel, however. In Matthew 8:14-15 for example, Jesus goes to the home of Peter and heals his mother-in-law of a fever.

Matthew 20:20-28 relates how ***the mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John) approaches Jesus with the request that her sons be given places of honour in Jesus' kingdom.*** These brief references suggest that the first disciples' separation from their families may not have been as complete as the verses in today's Gospel might lead us to believe. Matthew points out *the separation because he wants to show that Christian discipleship can require a change in our lives and even our family relationships.*

Perhaps the message for us today is to balance the radical call to be a follower of Jesus with the challenge to be "fishers of men" even within our own families. Creating this balance may require that we change some of the priorities of our own family life.

As a family, detail the activities of a typical day. ***Discuss together what priorities are reflected in this daily schedule. How does your family respond when your daily plans are interrupted or must be changed?***

Together read today's Gospel, Matthew 4:12-23.

Reflect together on the example of the first disciples who dropped everything to follow Jesus.

Does our family schedule give evidence that we put God first in our family life? What might we do to better reflect that God is our priority?

Pray together that your family will always give evidence that God comes first in your family life.

Pray today's Psalm or the Lord's Prayer.