

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time



*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea,
beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,
the people who sit in darkness
have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land
overshadowed by death
light has arisen.*

Reading 1 Isaiah 8:23—9:3

First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the end he has glorified the seaward road, the land west of the Jordan, the District of the Gentiles.

Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.

You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils.

For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14 R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? **R.**

One thing I ask of the LORD; this I seek:

To dwell in the house of the LORD

all the days of my life, **R.**

That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD

and contemplate his temple. **R.**

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD

in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD with courage;

Reading 2 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.

For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you.

I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel,

and not with the wisdom of human eloquence,

so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

Gospel Matthew 4:12-23 or 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled:

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From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen.

He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

At once they left their nets and followed him.

He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets.

He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

LOST IN THE RELIGIOUS CRISIS

We live in times of religious crisis. It seems that faith goes about ending up suffocated in the consciences of all too many people, repressed by modern culture and by the lifestyle of modern man. But at the same time, it's easy to observe that once again there is awakening in many people the search for meaning, the desire for a life that's different, the need for a God Friend.

It's certain that we find extended among us a generalized skepticism in the face of grand projects and grandiose words. The religious discourses that offer «salvation» or «redemption» no longer resonate in us. Hope itself has diminished, almost disappearing, that one could really hear somewhere a Good News for humanity.

At the same time in many there's growing the sensation that we've lost the clear way. Something is buried beneath our feet. We end up without goals or points of reference. We realize that we can solve «problems», but that we're less and less capable of resolving «the problem» of life. Aren't we more in need of salvation than ever before?

We also live in times of «fragmentation». Life has gotten compartmentalized. Each one lives in their own apartment. The humanism that sought truth and meaning globally has gone into the distance. Today you don't hear of any who know about life, but only specialists who know a lot about one section, but ignore all about the meaning of existence.

At the same time, quite a few people begin to feel bad in this fast-paced world of facts, information and statistics. We can't avoid the eternal questions of the human being. Where do we come from? Where are we going? Isn't there someplace we can find the ultimate meaning of life?

These are also times of scientific pragmatism. Modern man has decided (he doesn't know why) that the only things that exist are what can be proven by science. There's nothing else. What escapes science, simply doesn't exist. Naturally in this arrangement that's so simple as to be hardly scientific, God doesn't fit and religious faith ends up relegated to the out of balance world of the anti-progressives.

However, there are many who go about being conscious that this arrangement is very short-sighted, since it doesn't respond to reality. Life isn't a «big puzzle», nor is a human being just «a cog» in a world that can be unraveled by science. All around us you can feel the mystery: in the inner life of the human being, in the immensity of the cosmos, in the history of humanity.

That's why once again arises the suspicion: aren't the very questions that science is silent about, the ones that constitute the meaning of life? Wouldn't it be a grave mistake to forget the answer to the mystery of existence? Isn't it a tragedy to dispense with God so naively? Meanwhile Jesus' words keep coming at us right here: «Repent, because the Reign of God is at hand».

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