

Cycle A – Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jan. 22, 2023 (Sunday of the Word of God)

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near ...”

OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 27)

Leader: The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
All: The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
Leader: I believe that I shall see
the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
All: Wait for the Lord, be strong,
and let your heart take courage,
wait for the Lord!
Amen



First Reading – Isaiah 9:1-4

In the midst of Judah’s darkness and despair, Isaiah’s words communicate that the defeated people of Israel will get another chance at prosperity. The “former time” refers to a period of failure and oppression, the “latter time” promises new leadership in peace and harmony. It will happen because God wills it.

1. What have been your dark and your light times in the past year?
2. How do we become bearers of God’s light to one another?

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17-18

It is not hard to pick up Paul’s profound disappointment in the behaviour of the “saints” of Corinth. The pettiness of their arguments mocks the Gospel and fragments the meaning of the cross. The “foolishness” of the cross is to unite, not divide. Paul is urgent and unequivocal in his call to a radical conversion of heart in all parties. Baptism demands nothing less than a complete re-orientation of how we relate to one another.

1. Do the problems in Corinth exist in today’s church? Explain.
2. What advice can we take from Paul about resolving differences among denominations?

Gospel – Matthew 4:12-23

Echoes of the Isaiah passage from the first reading sound in today's Gospel account from Matthew, after we hear that Jesus made his home in his native Nazareth. Close connections are drawn between Jesus and John the Baptist, followed by Jesus calling two sets of brothers as his disciples. Normally in Jewish custom, disciples seek out their teacher. Here Jesus takes the initiative and chooses his disciples. His appeal is such that the brothers' response is immediate and complete.

1. Name the similarities with the first reading. Why do you think this was important to Matthew?
2. How is this passage a summary of Jesus' entire ministry and mission?
3. How does Jesus call you, and how do you respond?

LIVING THE WORD

What is God's challenge for me/us this coming week?

PRAYING THE WORD

Intercession: For peace in places of conflict and division in families, schools, the workplace, our parish, our world and for a deeper awareness among Christians of the importance to strive for unity in Christian witness. We pray to the Lord.

Invite other intentions, then end with "Our Father ...")

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Jesus, you call us to follow you
and entrust us with your mission of love.

All: Forgive our strife, our divisions,
especially those created in your name.

Leader: Draw our hearts ever closer to one another
through our common baptism and discipleship,

All: so that we become once again worthy
to bear your name as Saviour of the world.
Amen.

Leader: Let us share with one another the sign of Christ's Peace.