THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FIRST READING: *1 Corinthians 1:10-13*

This is a reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters,

I beg you, in the name of Jesus,
to get along with each other
and be united in everything you think and do.
Some of Chloe's friends told me
that you are arguing with each other.
Some of you are saying, "I belong to Paul!"
or "I belong to Peter!"
or "I belong to Apollos!"
or "I belong to Christ!"
But Christ can't be divided up like that.
Was I the one who died for you?
Or were you baptized in my name?
No, we all belong to Christ.

This is the Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 71*

I have been yours since the day of my birth,
and you have been my God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Jesus said, "From now on you will be gathering people in."
Alleluia! "You will be gathering people in."

GOSPEL: *Matthew 4:18-23, 17*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

One day, as Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee,
he saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew.
They were fishing, and Jesus called to them,

"Come, follow me.
From now on you will be gathering people instead of fish."

Peter and Andrew left their fishing nets right away
and followed Jesus.

A little while later, Jesus saw two other brothers,
James and John. They were also fishermen.
They were in their boat with their father, Zebedee,
when Jesus called to them.
Right away they left their boat and followed him.
Jesus went all around Galilee
teaching in the synagogues,
preaching the good news,
and healing people of their diseases.

This is the Good News of the Lord.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 26, 2020

The Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand

Scripture Background

Connections to Church Teaching and Tradition

- "Even when preoccupied with temporal affairs, the laity can and must be involved in the precious work of evangelizing the world" (LG, 35).
- "The apostolate of the Church and of all of its members is primarily designed to manifest Christ's message by words and deeds and to communicate his grace to the world" (AA, 6).
- "Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to cooperate freely with his plans" (CCC, 323).

Isaiah 8:23—9:3 This reading includes the well-known and inspiring line "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (9:1). What was this darkness? The lands of Zebulun and Naphtali were the northernmost tribes of Israel and were geographically close to Assyria. They were the first captured and the last restored when the Assyrians invaded Israel.

The great light that Isaiah proclaims to the Hebrews is a hymn of thanksgiving (9:1–6) for their deliverance from their captors. However, Isaiah also expresses concern for the Hebrews who remain under Assyrian power.

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 (1a) "The Lord is my light and my salvation." The theme of this psalm, which we sing only a part of today, is confidence and trust in the Lord (27:1–3). Light is a biblical image for life and happiness. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; / whom should I fear?" v. 1). In verses 4–6, the psalmist expresses confidence in the Lord, wishing to dwell in God's house, away from enemies. The Temple shines as God's house and is the perfect refuge. With the psalmist, we pray that we may gaze on the loveliness of God, who is our light and salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17 Paul's preaching of the kingdom was built on the common union of all believers. As members of Christ's Body, this union was nourished and centered in the Eucharist. Paul is very sensitive to the lack of this unity, and addresses it here. It was clear that the Corinthians did not all share the same vision but were, in fact, hostile to one another.

To help make his point, Paul asks: "Is Christ divided?" In this question, "Christ" means the community of believers (1 Corinthians 6:15, 12:12). He asks why the community is divided according to who baptized them. Was it Paul, Apollos, or Cephas? He reminds them they are baptized into Christ. Paul also teaches them that his vocation is not to baptize, but to preach. To preach is to release the power of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:7–12). Authentic preaching builds up the Body of Christ.

Matthew 4:12–23 or 4:12–17 After John the Baptist was handed over, Jesus came to Capernaum by the sea, on the northwest shores of the Sea of Galilee in the tribal land of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to indicate that the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee was in accord with the Scriptures, as we hear in the First Reading. Jesus began his public preaching saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 17). He begins his preaching with the words of the Baptist, but now with the difference that the kingdom is near and has begun to be present. This kingdom of heaven indicates that time when God's power and judgment are made fully manifest and acknowledged by all.

The Sea of Galilee was large, and was an important trade route and home to a major fishing industry. In Matthew's account of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, Jesus introduces the key disciples of his inner circle. These first disciples, Simon and Andrew, were fishermen and brothers. They owned their nets and boats, but left behind their possessions and source of income when Jesus called them to follow him in a new mission to become "fishers of men." James and John, two other brothers, who worked with their father, Zebedee, were also called that day.

Their immediate response highlights Jesus' attractiveness and persuasiveness. They had no understanding of what this invitation would mean or how it would change their lives. Yet, each of them immediately dropped their nets, left their boats, and followed Jesus.

Jesus went all over Galilee teaching the Good News of the kingdom. He taught and preached this Good News to all: the rich and poor, the learned and unschooled, the sinner and pious. Furthermore, he acted as a healer and exorcist for their ills and sufferings. What did the disciples learn and question as they walked the dusty paths of Galilee? What did this "fishing for men" mean in their daily lives? How are we called to "fish for men" today?

Preparation

When the Master called them, the first Apostles left everything to respond to Jesus' call. Their belongings and livelihoods left on the seashore, Peter, Andrew, James, and John responded to Jesus' call in a most radical and loving manner; they simply followed Jesus without hesitation. We too are called to follow our Lord without hesitation and with great joy as he leads us to encounter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Lectionary for Mass #67A

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 (1a)

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Matthew 4:12–23

Objectives

- To help children reflect on what Jesus meant by the "Kingdom of Heaven."
- To help them understand that Jesus calls us to follow him and to share the truth of God's love with others.

Preparation and Materials

- Read the Season Background, the Lectionary readings, and the Scripture Background.
- Bookmark the appropriate readings (see page xiii) in the Lectionary, children's Lectionary, or Bible. Place the book in a convenient location for the leader.
- Write the words of dismissal on a card for the priest celebrant.
- Prepare the words of the song the children will sing as they gather in the space for the Liturgy of the Word.
- Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.
- Display the Responsorial Psalm refrain lyrics.
- Display the Apostles' or Nicene Creed.
- Prepare intercessions for the Prayer of the Faithful adapted for the needs of the Church, world, oppressed or marginalized, and local community.

Prayer Leader Reflection Questions

? How do you follow Jesus each day?

? If someone asked you what being a Christian is about, what would you say?

Procession

Following the Collect of the Mass, the priest celebrant picks up the Lectionary and invites those who would like to participate in the Liturgy of the Word with children to come forward and gather in the center aisle. The people who will lead the children out and facilitate the Liturgy of the Word also come forward at this time. Holding the Lectionary so that all can see, the priest celebrant sends the children forth using his own words or the following:

Priest: **Beloved children, we send you now to listen carefully to the Word of God. Think about how you can be more like Jesus. May you open your hearts wide to the truth of the Scriptures. Go in peace.**

The leader processes out holding the Lectionary, and the children follow behind. The parish music minister may have selected a song of dismissal for the assembly to sing while the children leave. A good option is "Listen to God's Word" (Haas).

Centering

Continue to sing the song of dismissal that the assembly sang as you left the church. Or sing the refrain from "Gathered as One" (Tate), or "Gather Us In" (Haugen), or have instrumental music playing as the children gather in the space for the Liturgy of the Word.

Place the Lectionary on the ambo or lectern. Light the candle placed by the ambo or lectern, and then lead the following prayer:

Loving God,
help us to remember and understand your message today
about being one body in Christ.
Give us the strength and courage to love others as Jesus showed us.
Through Christ our Lord.

Children: **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 (1a) *Sing the same musical setting that is used in your parish's celebration of the liturgy.*

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Gospel Acclamation

Sing the Gospel Acclamation used in your parish's celebration of the liturgy.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 4:12–23

Homily/Reflection

Jesus often said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What did Jesus mean that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand? He meant that God would soon be known to all. God's power and might would soon be unmistakable to every person.

During his ministry, Jesus preached about the Kingdom of Heaven in many places. He knew that we need to understand the love of God. So when he showed compassion to people, he was showing them God's love in a very real way. To show compassion means to show care or concern or sympathy. Your parents might show that to you when you feel sick or don't feel good. Or maybe our priests have shown you compassion when you feel sorrow for your sins.

Now, let's hold our hands out and look at them. Jesus was saying that God's Kingdom is as close as your hand. What do you notice about your hand? Is it close to you or far from you? Even if you reach your hand out as far as you can, it is still attached to you. It is always as close as your body, because it is a part of your body. Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is as close to us as that. Jesus meant that we should look for and see God in moments of our everyday lives. Jesus also told the people to repent. When we repent, we sin no more and return to God. So, Jesus wanted to let everyone know that they needed pure, clean hearts in order to recognize God in our everyday moments. If we turn our hearts to God, and look for the light of God's love, we will see that the Kingdom of Heaven is very close to us indeed.

Jesus wanted the people of his time to know that God's Kingdom was different from what they were expecting. Originally, the Hebrew people did have a kingdom, an earthly one. And, they were

thinking that the Messiah, or Savior, would come and help them get their kingdom back. They expected the Messiah to be a powerful leader who would reign over the nation and protect the people. But when Jesus preached, his message was that God's Kingdom would be different, that it was more about people showing one another compassion—like he did during his ministry. We can also help to bring about the Kingdom by praying.

It was there in Capernaum that Jesus began to call his disciples. Jesus did not go to mansions or castles to visit the richest, smartest, and most powerful people. Instead, at the seashore, Jesus called his first disciples, who were simple, hardworking fishermen. Peter and Andrew were the first whom Jesus called. The Lord told Peter and Andrew that he would make them fishers of men. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, also responded to Jesus' call. In Jesus they saw a man worthy of their devotion; they were so willing to follow Jesus that they no longer worried about their work and livelihood. The first disciples wanted to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven. They wanted to know God, love him more, and follow Jesus into closer relationship with God. How brave these men were, dropping everything familiar and following Jesus! We too can follow Jesus, copying the example of these first disciples.

These men would follow Jesus as he preached the Kingdom of Heaven. They would be the first to hear his word, and the first to begin to comprehend it. They would be witnesses to the great love of God in the person of Jesus. They would then be the first to preach this Good News after learning it from Jesus. They would be the first generation of believers to pass on the Good News to the next generation. These disciples are responsible for the Good News being passed onto us. Now it is our turn to pass on the Good News and to tell others about God's love.

? How will you show care or compassion or sympathy to someone else this week?

Profession of Faith

Following the homily or reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith. Together, sing or recite the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. Refer the children to the words of the prayer that you have displayed.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: **United in faith and in complete trust, let us bring our needs before our gracious God. Please respond, "Lord, hear us."**

May the Church and her clergy lead their flock toward the Kingdom of Heaven and for more men to respond to the call of Jesus to become "fishers of men," let us pray to the Lord: *Lord, hear us.*

May our country's leaders preserve the right of religious liberty and the right to life, let us pray to the Lord: *Lord, hear us.*

May those who are imprisoned—physically and emotionally—find consolation in Christ, let us pray to the Lord: *Lord, hear us.*

May our parish community be a shining example of care, compassion, and sympathy, let us pray to the Lord: *Lord, hear us.*

Invite other intercessions from the children, or add intercessions based on the current needs of the Church, the world, the oppressed or marginalized, and the local community. Conclude each of the children's petitions with, **"let us pray to the Lord,"** *and invite the response,* **"Lord, hear us."**

May those who have died live with God forever in heaven, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Heavenly Father,
help us grow closer to you every day.
May we bring others to see the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.
Through Christ our Lord.

Children: **Amen.**

Quietly return with the children to the main assembly. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.