

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Reading I: [Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3](#)
Responsorial Psalm: 27: 1, 4, 13-14
Reading II: [I Cor 1: 10-13, 17](#)
Gospel: [Matt 4: 12-23](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/012223.cfm>



Matteo Di Giovanni, 1470s

The Gospel passages return to Matthew today and for most of the coming weeks. Matthew sets the geographical setting for the ministry of Jesus. In the previous chapter, Jesus left his home and went south along the River Jordan where John was baptizing. Jesus then went to the desert. Following his time in the desert, Jesus hears that John has been arrested and goes to the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee to the village of Capernaum. This is the area that gentiles had controlled for many years. As the quote from Isaiah notes: the people had lived in darkness because of the gentile culture that surrounded them. Isaiah had prophesied that a light would rise for them. Jesus is that light, the promised one, for whom the people of Israel waited.

The gospels are not presenting a historical narrative. They do not present the events that preceded Jesus' call of the first disciples. They may have heard him speak and had conversations with him. They may have heard about him from others. No background is given. When Jesus invites them to follow him, they respond.

Each person's call from God comes in God's time. For some, they have learned slowly, a little at a time. For others, there is some major event that breaks open their awareness. God works with each person. There is great value in paying attention to what happens in one's life. St Ignatius of Loyola suggested that everyone take time each day to pay attention to the large and small events and be aware of the movements within that accompany them. Did a conversation bring you a sense of peace? Did you feel disturbed by someone at a meeting? Did you experience gratitude for a gift that came your way? For those sincerely seeking God, God works gently and invites them to peace and wholeness. Take time to look back over your day. What stands out for you? For what are you most grateful? This practice can help you grow in your awareness of God's presence and action in your life.

Secondly, the disciples responded to the call. God's call invites us in a unique and personal way to use our gifts to meet the needs that are around us. Many people fear that God will ask them to do something very difficult. God knows our strengths and weaknesses. God also knows where each person can grow. God's invitations are tailored to each person. God has planted the deepest desires in our hearts. While we may not fully recognize these or understand God's invitation, God's call will be toward life.

The decision to respond requires faith. It is a trusting reliance in someone, in God. Faith invites one to live in a relationship even if one does not understand what will happen in the future. Based on the other person's reliability, one chooses to move forward. Peter and Andrew, James and John trusted that Jesus would lead them to something greater. This is the same trust that Jesus asks of each follower.

The first reading from Isaiah has some of the same verses that Matthew presents. The original context was the annexation of the areas of Zebulun and Naphtali by the Assyrians around 73 years before Jesus. Isaiah encouraged the people that God would raise up a future king to bring them back into the community of Israel from the darkness. Evil will be

defeated, and God's ways will be restored. The ultimate fulfillment, as noted above, comes with the arrival of Jesus.

Paul addresses the divisions that have developed in the community at Corinth. Corinth was a seaport with many ideas and movements. Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter. Apollos was another teacher. People formed groups based on who had first announced the Gospel to them or had baptized them. Paul's message is that the Church is not like other organizations. The Church is the Body of Christ. In the introduction last week, Paul addressed them as the "Church of God that is in Corinth." The Church is the work of God, not that of any individual. Since it is made up of humans, it will have faults. Christ came to save us and bring us to wholeness. Paul sees this as his mission in preaching the Gospel so that God can work in us individually in our local community.

The work of Christian Unity continues to this day. Divisions between ecclesial communities, churches in different nations and cultures, and local personalities continue to detract from the Gospel. Christians remain in need of the saving work of Christ. Let us pray that Christ's prayer that "they may all be one" will be fulfilled.

Key themes:

Discipleship

Gospel as Light

Listening in Prayer

Discernment

Christian Unity

Reflection questions:

Where do you recognize the darkness in our society?

What scripture passages bring light and hope to you?

How do you understand Church?

What is the mission of the Church?

Prayer suggestions:

For the Church: that the Holy Spirit will free us from all our attachments so that we may follow Jesus' call to serve the reign of God

For a spirit of hope: that all who find themselves walking in darkness and without purpose may be enlightened by the Spirit so that they may live life with meaning and dedication

For all who are discerning a call to ministry: that God will help them hear their call and recognize the gifts they have so that they can assist with all the needs of human hearts

For healing in Christian communities: that those who are experiencing struggles and rivalries may allow the Spirit to touch their hearts and transform their minds so that the Body of Christ may be one in serving and praising God

For all who feel caught in the darkness of depression or addiction: that the light of God's love will guide them to freedom and a new beginning