

Archbishop's CMA Audio Homily

January 21/22, 2023

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 8:23-9:3; Ps 27, 1 Cor 10-13; Mt 4:12-23 (LONGER VERSION)

“The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light; on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death, light has arisen.” With these words in today’s Gospel, St. Matthew echoes the prophet Isaiah to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. Moreover, as followers of Christ, that light continues to shine through us when we heed the words of St. Paul to “do good to all.”

This is Archbishop Dennis Schnurr with some reflections on today’s readings.

It is undeniable that we live in a very divided world. However, it does not have to be that way. After all, Christ, and only Christ, can bring light to a land of darkness. Christ, and only Christ, can bring unity where division and discord exist. That is the message of the three Scripture passages today.

In the first reading, the Prophet Isaiah evokes an image of division by his reference to Zebulun and Naphtali, two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Since they were at the northern end of the kingdom, they were physically removed from the center of life in Jerusalem. After being conquered by the Assyrians, they became culturally and spiritual separated from the rest of the Jewish people. That led to an ever-greater division from the former kingdom of David. The Prophet Isaiah, however, offers a vision of a future where the Messiah will bring

abundant joy and great rejoicing: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwell in the land of gloom a light has shone.”

St. Matthew, in today’s Gospel, shows how Isaiah’s Messianic vision was fulfilled in Christ. Living in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, Jesus preaches the coming of the kingdom and cures every disease and illness among the people. However, He does not do this alone. He invites the brothers, Simon and Andrew, both fishermen, to “come and follow.” They leave their nets and obey. He then calls another pair of brothers, James and John, who leave their behind boat and father to join Him.

In the second reading, St. Paul urges the Corinthians not to fall into dissention and rivalries, but to be united in Christ through baptism. While the Church in Corinth had broken into factions, St. Paul encourages the early Christians to be of one mind in following Christ, who is not divided.

Today Christ calls all of us, as members of the one united Body of Christ, to continue to bring light and healing to a dark and hurting world. One of the very concrete ways we do that throughout the 19 counties of our local Church is through the annual Catholic Ministries Appeal. The CMA supports Catholic Charities and Catholic Social Services; St. Rita School for the Deaf; Campus Ministry, Hospital Ministry, and Prison Ministry. The CMA also supports the Center for the New Evangelization; Retired Priests; and Mount St. Mary’s Seminary and School of Theology. These six vital ministries teach, feed, and heal our brothers and sisters every day.

In some ways, the numbers tell the tale: Catholic Charities of Southwestern Ohio served 17,000 families last year through its Food for All program. Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley distributed more than one million pounds of food through the Choice Food Pantry. Thousands of young adults were reached through New Evangelization programs. St. Rita School for the Deaf has more than 200 students enrolled, serving a student population with a number of special needs. Our seminary has 83 men in formation to be priests, 46 of whom are studying for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, including seven who will be ordained for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati this spring.

Thirteen college students and eight prison inmates entered the Church or received the Sacraments of Initiation this past year through the efforts of our campus ministry and our prison ministry.

Beyond those numbers, however, the impact of the CMA ministries may be affecting you and those close to you more than you realize. For example:

The retired priests who are helping out in your parish or family of parishes, whose continued service is absolutely vital to our local Church- these priests are supported by the CMA.

So are the hospital chaplains and volunteers who may have brought the Sacraments and pastoral care to you, to a friend, or to a relative—perhaps one who was nearing death.

If you have sons or daughters, grandchildren, friends, or neighbors at the University of Cincinnati, Wright State University, or Miami University, the CMA is there supporting campus ministry and helping students live their faith at what may be a challenging time in their lives.

Engaged couples will get a solid preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony by attending a Genesis Pre-Cana retreat offered by the Center for the New Evangelization.

And someone in your family or in your neighborhood who needs pregnancy or parenthood support after choosing life, or who need help after an adoption, can find that assistance from Catholic Charities or Catholic Social Services.

When you and I support the Catholic Ministries Appeal, we partner together to respond to the call of Christ which we heard in the Gospel today: “Come follow me.” St. Paul further encourages us in his letter to the Galatians, from which we draw the 2023 CMA theme. “Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up... So then, let us do good to all.” (Gal 6: 9, 10b) This is what brings light into the darkness. This is what restores a land overshadowed by death.

Last year’s CMA campaign was the most successful ever. To all of you who contributed, I am very grateful. I thank you on behalf of the thousands of individuals who have benefited. I invite you to continue your support. And if you have not donated to CMA in the past, I invite you to learn more about these six ministries and prayerfully consider a donation.

“So then, let us do good to all.” Together, as the Body of Christ, we can do so much more than we can do alone.

Thank you, and God bless!