

## THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

By Al Mansfield

Isaiah 8:23-9:3

Psalm 27

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Matthew 4:12-23

### A GREAT LIGHT

Imagine walking or driving along an unfamiliar road in pitch black darkness...not something anyone would really want to do. Physical darkness is bad enough, but spiritual darkness is far worse. That is the message today at the beginning of this year as we consider the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. He is the Light of the World, and in the gospel readings each successive week we see this light glow brighter and brighter.

#### ISAIAH

Today's first reading comes from the prophet Isaiah in the eighth century BC. He prophesies that the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, which was the first territory to be occupied during the Assyrian invasion, would be glorified by the Lord. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

This prophecy of Isaiah is quoted by St. Matthew in today's gospel as having been fulfilled by Jesus. Also, several verses also come up in the first reading for Christmas Midnight Mass.

The Responsorial, Psalm 27, continues the theme of light: "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

#### GOSPEL

Our gospel today describes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Matthew quotes Isaiah 9:1-2 to indicate that Jesus fulfilled this ancient prophecy.

Jesus proclaims the same message that John the Baptist had: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

The gospel account continues with the call of Jesus' first disciples - Peter and Andrew, James and John - two sets of brothers and all fishermen, called to leave their boats and nets.

Today's gospel concludes with a summary of Jesus' ministry in Galilee - preaching, teaching, and healing.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS

St. Paul founded the Church in Corinth around 50/51 AD, and remained there to shepherd the community about 18 months. Some years afterward, he wrote this letter to correct some problematic situations that had emerged.

In today's reading, Paul addresses divisions in the Christian community, apparently based on allegiances to different leaders. Paul severely chastises this behavior. Only Jesus was crucified; only in Jesus' name were they baptized.

Interestingly enough, in another place in this same letter Paul admits that "there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized" (1 Cor. 11:15).

Finally, Paul gives an insight into his call and mission. "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel..." His vocation was primarily that of an apostle and not a pastor, with great emphasis on the ministry of the word of God.

#### LET THE LIGHT SHINE

In the gospels, Jesus refers to himself as "the light of the world" (John 8:12). He also says to his followers - to us - "you are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). The word of God is called our light (cf. Psalm 119:105). Jesus is "the true light to come into the world" (John 1:9). We are not to hide our light but to let our light shine (cf. Matt. 5:16).

Our prayer on this Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is that the Lord would fill us more and more with the light of his Holy Spirit, that we might provide much light in the darkened world we live in.