



AMDG
THIRD SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A,
26TH JANUARY 2020



The Lord is my Light and my Help

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.

Pope Francis has designated today as the Sunday of the Word of God, when we are reminded that the Lord is in constant dialogue with his people through his Holy Word. Let us ask to hear the Lord and enter more deeply into relationship with him as we pray.

In the *First Reading*, Isaiah foretells of the Lord coming among his people, describing him as a light who will guide them through darkness, easing their burden and bringing them joy.

The *Psalms* continues the image of the light of the Lord giving us strength and helping us to overcome fear. Its words encourage us to seek the Lord and remain hopeful.

The *Second Reading* is a heartfelt call for unity, made to the early church in Corinth. It is a timely reminder for today's Church that we are all united though the Good News we are called to proclaim. Christ is one and cannot be divided up: we are all one in him.

Isaiah's ancient prophecy of the Messiah as a light in the darkness is repeated in today's *Gospel*, where Matthew links it to the start of Jesus's mission. On hearing that John the Baptist has been arrested, Jesus sets out and begins to preach, using the same call to repentance as John did. Just as John had gathered a small group of followers, so Jesus invites the first of his disciples.

As we pray, let's remember that we, too, are called to follow Jesus. We do not pray alone, but belong to a community of believers united by our baptism. We share the same hope of which the psalmist sang, and are guided by the same light that Isaiah spoke of. May we seek and build the unity that Paul longed for.

FIRST READING ISAIAH 8: 23–9: 3

In days past the Lord humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in days to come he will confer glory on the Way of the Sea on the far side of Jordan, province of the nations.

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light;
on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.

You have made their gladness greater,

you have made their joy increase,

they rejoice in your presence

as men rejoice at harvest time,

as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils.

For the yoke that was weighing on him,

the bar across his shoulders,

the rod of his oppressor,

these you break as on the day of Midian.

I prepare for prayer wherever I may be, by gently encouraging my body and mind to settle. I take a long, slow breath and allow my body to find its own soothing rhythm of breathing.

If it's possible where I am praying, I may light a candle and allow my gaze to settle on the warm glow of the light. If I am praying surrounded by others, perhaps on a bus or train, I light a candle within my imagination and feel the glow of the light fill up my body.

I read the passage slowly and with warmth in my inner voice.

I repeat this as many times as I feel drawn.

I allow the mood and movement of the passage to bring light to wherever I may notice darkness in my own life, or in the life of others around me.

What do I feel in my body as my mind focuses on the words and images of the prophecy?

I share what I notice with God as I would with a close friend.

With my own words, I thank God for this time of prayer.

As I bring my prayer to a close, I imagine the light of God filling my whole being, touching my darkness with compassion, radiating out to bring light, gladness and joy to the world around me.

In my heart I say 'Amen!'

GOSPEL MATTHEW 4: 12–23 (part)

Hearing that John had been arrested, Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!

Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,

Galilee of the nations!

The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light;

on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death

a light has dawned.

From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand”.

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them. “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”. And they left their nets at once and followed him. [...]

Jesus went around the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

Having allowed myself space to slow down and settle, I read the Gospel slowly. I let images form in my mind and try to picture or sense what the villages of ancient Galilee would have been like.

I read the Gospel again, and imagine seeing Jesus setting off to preach on his own, after hearing of John’s arrest.

What do I hear him say and what do I see him do?

How do I respond?

I then watch Jesus walking alone along the shore of the lake.

I hear him calling out to Peter and Andrew.

What is their response? What do I notice?

Using my imagination, I see Jesus approaching *me* today as I go about my life.

I hear him say ‘[my name], follow me’.

What is my response to his call?

I share with Jesus the deepest longings of my heart.

I finish my prayer by making a reverent sign of the cross.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light.

First Reading

Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.

Hope in the Lord!

Psalm

Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Gospel

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
the one who follows me will have the light of life.

Communion Antiphon

This week's texts if you want to reflect further

Isaiah 8: 23–9:3; Ps. 26 (27); 1 Cor. 1:10–13:17; Matthew 4: 12–23



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