

The Third Sunday of Ordinary Time: Light To Those In Darkness

In today's readings we come upon the same passage twice. In both *Isaiah*, the first reading, and in our gospel from *Matthew* we heard: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen.

The first is a prophecy. The second is a report. Isaiah said this would happen. Matthew reports that it did happen.

Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, where were these places? They were in the northern part of Galilee. One of the cities there was Capernaum. Jesus made Capernaum His base of operation when He started His ministry. These are the people who would first experience the Light.

Four of them were fishermen: Simon, later to be called Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James and his brother John. The Lord's call to them was so powerful that they immediately left their boats and nets. From the very beginning they were told that they would have a mission, they would become fishers of men. The people of Galilee and beyond, far beyond, would no longer walk in darkness.

But many people still walk in darkness. Many people choose to walk in darkness. There are many who do not want to know the truth. They would rather stay in the dark. Here are three examples: This week there was the annual March for Life. Perhaps you might ask why have this march since Roe vs Wade has been overturned. Roe vs Wade did not outlaw abortions, it just said that no one has a federal right to an abortion. Many people do not want to know what happens in an abortion clinic. Nor do they want to know how a woman's life is forever changed when the life within her is destroyed. This is not pleasant. Many people would rather stay in the dark. A second example: many people do not want to know about the 150 billion dollar human trafficking industry. That number was published by Forbes in 2020. But many people do not want to hear about sexual slavery much of which is generated by the porn industry. That is not pleasant to hear or to think about. They would rather stay in the dark. A final example: there are many people who do not want to hear how drugs are destroying our society. They hide behind the "everybody's doing it" argument and choose to chance destroying their own lives.

Those who have been called by Christ to be his disciples, all of us, have to have the courage to bring the light of His Truth to those who choose darkness.

There are many people who are thrown into darkness. Due to no fault of their own, they are put into horrible situations. There are many children who have been shuffled from home to home in the foster system and then forced to make their way alone in the world when they turn 18. If we come upon a young person in this situation we need to do our best to help them get started in life. That can lead them out of

darkness. There are many elderly people who are left with hardly any income to support themselves. I once had a visit from a thin lady in her late 80's living on \$1,100 a month and avoiding necessities like decent food. She told me that her fondest hope was that she would die soon so she would not have to worry about her bills any longer. That is no way for a person to finish his or her life. By the way, money parishioners like you folk give to the poor was used to help her. I can assure you that your generosity has brought light to many who are in darkness.

Sometimes people will say to me, and, I'm sure, to you, "There is nothing anybody can do. There is no way out for me. I did this to myself." An elderly man with a breathing apparatus came to see me once. His every breathe was a struggle. He said to me, "There is nothing you can do. Don't feel sorry for me. I did this to myself smoking three packs a day for years." Well, there is something we can do. We can love them. We can help wherever possible. We can let them know that they are not alone in the world. We can pray with them. We can pray for them.

The world is beautiful for those who are in the light. The world is horrible for those who are in darkness. We are in the light. We need to bring this light to others. Like Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, we need to let people know about Jesus Christ. We need to let them know that He is alive and active in the world. We need to let them know that He loves them. We need to let them know that He is calling them to come into His Light.

We are not followers of Jesus Christ for ourselves. We have not been called to embrace a selfish relationship with the Lord. We have been called so we can use our own unique talents to bring others to Christ. Our central prayer, the fundamental prayer of the Church, is the Mass. The word Mass is derived from the Latin word for sending. We come together each week, and for some every day, to receive the grace, the strength we need to complete the mission with which we have been entrusted. We need to lead them to join us in the journey of the Kingdom of God. "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand," Jesus preached. "We all need to repent, for the Kingdom of God is here," we echo.

On Christmas I spoke about Divine Starlight. (See <https://frjoeshomilies.net/12-25-25.pdf>.) Here is another way of looking at this. Have you ever seen the stars on a clear night when you are far away from man made lights, say on a camping trip or in some remote place? Once our eyes adjust, we realize that so many stars fill the sky that it seems to be on fire. It is wonderful. It might be night around us, but we are not in the dark. We are in starlight. Here is another stellar reality: We are the stars in God's sky, every one of us. And just as each star shines light on the world, every one of us is necessary to illuminate the world with His Light.

Every single one of us is a star. We have been called by Christ to enlighten the world. If we live in His Light, we will bring His Light to others.

And Jesus said,

“You are the light of the world.... Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” Mt 5: 14, 16