

January 22, 2023 – Third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Our Lives are to Make a Positive Difference in the Lives of Others  
Gospel of Matthew 4:12-23  
Fr. Oliver

Today's readings show that the early Christians understood how Jesus had fulfilled the expectations of ancient Israel. Describing the humble beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, today's Scripture readings teach us that Christ has brought us from the darkness of sin into the Light of God (4:16) by calling us to repentance (4:17) and the acceptance of God's rule over us.

The first reading contains the prophetic reference to Christ as the Light that dispels darkness. Matthew wanted his readers to recognize that the Light Isaiah spoke of had finally appeared with the coming of Jesus.

In the second reading, Paul advises the Corinthians to live as children of the Light, avoiding divisions and rivalries, because several factions had arisen among the Corinthians, each claiming allegiance to its first Christian teacher or to a particular Apostle, which threatened to splinter the Community.

Today's Gospel reading (Mt. 4:12-23) makes us realize that what had been prophesied by Isaiah was fulfilled through Jesus. In his ministry of calling disciples and reforming lives, Jesus also brought Light to peoples in darkness, restoring and fulfilling God's original promise. His presence made a great difference in the life of the people of Capernaum as well as those of neighbouring towns of Zebulon and Naphtali. His light was strongly felt because it brought healing and deliverance.

Two Jews were sitting in a Chinese restaurant. "Are there any Jews in China?" one of them asked. "I don't know," the other replied. "Why don't we ask the waiter?" When the waiter came by, one of them said, "Do you have any Chinese Jews?" "I don't know sir, let me ask," the waiter replied, and he went into the kitchen. He quickly returned and said, "No, sir. No Chinese Jews." "Are you sure?" "I will check with our manager, sir." the waiter replied and went back to the kitchen. While he was still gone, one of the Jews said, "I cannot believe there are no Jews in China. Our people are scattered everywhere." When the waiter returned, he said, "Sir, no Chinese Jews." "Are you really sure?" "I cannot believe you have no Chinese Jews." "Sir, I asked everyone," the waiter replied exasperated. "We have orange juice, prune juice, tomato juice, and grape juice, but no one ever heard of Chinese juice!" That's about the God's chosen people! Let's try to see some of the nuances of today's readings.

**1) We need to appreciate our call to be Christ's disciples:** Every one of us is called by God, both individually and as Church members. The mission of preaching, teaching, and healing which Jesus began in Galilee is now the responsibility of the Church. Our own unique vocation and relationship with the risen Lord is never separated from the Body of the universal Church. Be we priest, married, or single lay persons, male or female, we are all called, and in this call we become what God wants us to be. Our response to the call begins with our Baptism and Confirmation, the Sacraments of Initiation. That response is strengthened through the years by the

Eucharist and Reconciliation, and is made manifest in Matrimony or Holy Orders. We are healed and consoled in the Anointing which also prepares us for death. In addition, God is relentless in calling us back to Himself when we stray from Him. Let us make personal efforts, then, to see the Light of Christ and to grow in holiness by learning the truths that are revealed through the Holy Catholic Church and its Sacraments.

**2) God sends us to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom:** *"Jesus travelled throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness among the people"* (Mt. 4:23). Equally today, the Word of God, the promoting of the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven, heals all kinds of ills. The Word of God transforms hearts so that victims may forgive those who have harmed them, those who have physically sexually, or psychologically abused them. When we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are sent forth to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom and to defend the Catholic Faith. As we continue with the celebration of the Holy Mass, let us ask the Lord Jesus to give us the strength and perseverance to answer His calling so that we may faithfully serve the Lord according to His Divine Will.

The story is told about a Protestant pastor that got up in the pulpit and apologized for the band-aid on his face. He said, "I was thinking about my homily while shaving and cut my face." The congregation responded: Oooohh! Afterward the trustee found a note in the collection plate, "Next time, think about your face and cut the homily."

**3) We need to become the light of the world as Jesus was the Light in darkness:** The mission and role of Christians is to receive the light of Christ and radiate it to everyone as love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, humble service, and respect for those with different ethnic backgrounds, different lifestyles, other faiths, or no faith at all. With a little bit of Christ's Light, we become a veritable lighthouse, illuminating the way for many and removing the darkness caused by hatred, spite, and jealousy. Yes, our lives are intended to make a positive vibe in the lives of many others!