

SPIRITUALITY

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

cf. Matt 4:23

R<sup>1</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and cured every disease among the people.

R<sup>2</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel** Matt 4:12-23; L67A

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,

he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and went to live in

Capernaum by the sea,

in the region of Zebulun and

Naphtali,

that what had been said through

Isaiah the prophet

might be fulfilled:

*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.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,

Simon who is called Peter, and his

brother Andrew,

casting a net into the sea; they were

fishermen.

He said to them,

“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

At once they left their nets and followed him.

He walked along from there and saw two other brothers,

James, the son of Zebedee, and his

brother John.

*Continued in Appendix A, p. 266,*

*or Matt 4:12-17 in Appendix A, p. 266.*

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

In many northern states, the dead of winter brings gray, dreary day upon gray, dreary day. When finally the clouds break and the sun shines forth in all its warmth and glory, people's moods change. Cabin fever is dispelled by going out and enjoying the bright light and glistening freshness. Although the trees, grass, flower beds still seem dead, we ourselves feel we are at a turning point, even if for just one day. Sunlight encourages hope, anticipation, the end of seeming deadness. This gospel passage tells of a turning point in Jesus' life, a turning point that lasts far longer than one day. “From that time on . . . the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” “From that time on” the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that “light has arisen” to dispel darkness is coming to completion. “From that time on” Jesus' public ministry is set in motion. “From that time on” disciples are called. “From that time on” encounters with Jesus lead to changed lives. Then and now. From *this* time on . . . invitations to turning points that lead from darkness to light, from mundane tasks to announcing the Good News of salvation, from being dead-earth bound to “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”



As Jesus begins his public ministry, Jesus calls followers by issuing the command to “Come after me.” The gospel suggests that following Jesus is our way to walk in the light which reveals the kingdom of heaven at hand. The kingdom of heaven is neither earth's realm nor distant place. The kingdom of heaven is present in our response to Jesus. It is our willing obedience to hear him call us, to leave everything, to follow him without counting the cost. The “kingdom of heaven is at hand” when we turn from darkness and not only walk in the Light, but become that light ourselves. The “kingdom of heaven is at hand” when we are hearers of Jesus' call, proclaimers of his Good News, healers of ills, guardians of God's truth, builders of virtue, fishers of people, teachers of mercy and forgiveness, prophets of new life. In all these ways we are light that dispels the grayness and dreariness of lives dead to Jesus' Presence, lives shadowed by the darkness of uncertainty, lives limited by the closed-ness of a world devoid of light.

We must be able to see the Light who is our Savior before we can be light for others. To see and embrace the Light is already following Jesus. So, one consequence of hearing Jesus' call to leave all and follow him is the requirement to turn from darkness so we can see the Light. By changing the behaviors that bring darkness, we are able to focus on the Light that then shines brightly enough for us to follow—becoming the light ourselves.

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**Living the Paschal Mystery**

We shrink from darkness and dreariness; we don't like it. We prefer light. Yet seeing the Light who is Jesus is actually much easier than following the Light! John's faithfulness in preaching Jesus as the Messiah led him to prison and death. Jesus' preaching about God's kingdom at hand led him to the cross and death. If we follow the Light, we know what awaits us: dying to self. Yet dying is the only way we ourselves can become the light that shines for others. Following the Light takes us where we would rather not go. But it is only this Light that brings us everlasting Life. This is why we choose to follow. This is why we choose to be light. Jesus' call to us and our response to accept being the light is now, *this* time, our time.

**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** light has arisen, From that time on, kingdom of heaven is at hand, Come after me, followed him

**To the point:** This gospel passage tells of a turning point in Jesus' life. "From that time on . . . the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "From that time on" the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that "light has arisen" to dispel darkness is coming to completion. "From that time on" Jesus' public ministry is set in motion. "From that time on" disciples are called. "From that time on" encounters with Jesus lead to changed lives. Then and now. From *this* time on . . .

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** Matthew reveals Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: the light that comes to dispel the darkness of sin and suffering.

**to experience:** We don't need to look far for the darkness of sin and human suffering. We see it everywhere: newspaper and internet stories, TV newscasts, our own lives. This darkness can be overwhelming. What we perhaps do not see so readily is how we ourselves are to be the light of Christ dispelling this darkness.

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** The land of Zebulun and Naphtali (first reading) was a geographic region considered full of darkness and abandoned by God because it had been conquered by the Assyrians. When the land was returned to the Judean kingdom, the people dwelling there praised God for lifting them out of the darkness of oppression into the light of freedom. Isaiah uses this historical event as a metaphor for the coming of the Messiah, and Matthew (gospel) uses it to identify Christ as this long-awaited Light.

In singing these verses from Psalm 27, we join Isaiah and Matthew in proclaiming Jesus to be the Light of salvation for all the world. We announce that "the house of the LORD" (psalm) is the kingdom of heaven where sin is forgiven, and disease is healed (gospel). We reveal our desire "to dwell" (psalm) in this house by following Jesus and participating in his mission (gospel). Doing so will require a change in our way of living, but Jesus himself will give us the "courage" we need to remain "stouthearted" in our discipleship (psalm).

**to psalmist preparation:** Where is darkness in your life, and how do you experience Christ calling you to his light? Darkness and call are always specific, meaning they have to do with persons, events, crises, struggles, and graces that you can name. Pray for the grace of recognition so that you can understand and mean the words you sing in this responsorial psalm.

**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time,  
January 22, 2017**

**Gospel (cont.)**

Matt 4:12-23; L67A

They were in a boat, with their father  
Zebedee, mending their nets.  
He called them, and immediately they left  
their boat and their father  
and followed him.  
He went around all of Galilee,  
teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming  
the gospel of the kingdom,  
and curing every disease and illness among  
the people.

or Matt 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been  
arrested,  
he withdrew to Galilee.  
He left Nazareth and went to live in  
Capernaum by the sea,

**ASSEMBLY &  
FAITH-SHARING GROUPS**

- Jesus' announcement that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" calls me to . . .
- The light that has arisen in my life is . . . The darkness I have yet to dispel is . . .
- My encounters with Jesus have changed me in these ways . . .

**PRESIDERS**

Having been called to ordained ministry, "From that time on" my life has become . . .

**DEACONS**

My service helps others walk in the light of Christ by . . .

**HOSPITALITY MINISTERS**

My hospitality is a light shining for the people gathering that helps them see . . .

**MUSIC MINISTERS**

My music ministry helps the assembly see that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" when . . .

**ALTAR MINISTERS**

Like Jesus' first disciples, serving others well demands that I leave behind . . .

**LECTORS**

One way my life proclaims to others that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" is . . . and then my proclamation on Sunday sounds like . . .

**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS  
OF HOLY COMMUNION**

As I distribute Holy Communion and my face shines with the light of Christ, communicants . . .

in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,  
that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet  
might be fulfilled:

*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  
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From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,  
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."