

Spring 2011 First Week
Third Sunday Ordinary Time

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year A
January 23, 2011

Isaiah 8:23-9:3
1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
Matthew 4:12-23

GATHERING¹

(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and a green plant rest on a table covered with a green cloth.)

If new members are joining the community, some time is taken for people to become acquainted and for newcomers to learn something about the history of the community. All share their hopes and expectations about being a part of a small church community.)

Last week we celebrated the feast of the baptism of the Lord. This week we begin to follow Jesus' ministry in Galilee. We hear of his calling the disciples to follow.

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit and the leader invites members to attend to the presence of God in a time of quiet reflection. After a few minutes, the prayer continues as follows.)

¹ **Special Note: Quest** suggests that the leader for this session take particular note of the design for the Closing Prayer in this and subsequent units. Having become familiar with the design for Closing Prayer, it is suggested that the leader invite the community into some conversation about making sure to allow sufficient time to be able to take full advantage of the time for extended prayer.

Leader: The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?
The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

All: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Leader: One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:
to dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
that I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD
and contemplate his temple.

All: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Leader: I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.
Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

All: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

Focus Question

- ◆ When have you dropped everything you were doing to respond to something new?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

Surely, you have heard someone say, “Drop everything you are doing and come here.” Such a *request* has a sense of urgency about it. This gives us some sense of the pressing nature of Jesus’ call to James and John. He was, after all, addressing them in light of the in-breaking of God’s reign. Biblical scholar, Fr. John Meier, notes the unique features of the call of Jesus to his disciples. Firstly, Jesus seized the initiative in calling people to his person and mission. Secondly, one could not delay a response to this call.

Thirdly, the call entails real physical following of Jesus into new places and circumstances that could lead to the deadly opposition of others.¹

For Jesus' disciples, responding to this call entailed announcing, in word and deed, the universal saving significance of Jesus. Jesus' saving mission breaks through *narrow* visions that abruptly separate people into *saved* and *lost*. His grace is meant for all. The disciples' acceptance of the call changed their lives. Living it out cost them everything.

Jesus' pressing call to follow is addressed to us today. He calls us not just to follow personally, but to share his mission of drawing others to follow. It is not always an easy mission. There is a price to be paid. That is, we may be called to a *costly grace*.² This grace entails risk. It calls us to give clear witness to faith regularly in a life of ordinary service and sacrifice directed toward building peace and justice aimed toward universal reconciliation.

Jesus calls us to follow in the actual context of our lives, using the talents and resources that are available to us. On occasion, this may ask no more of us than simple courtesy. At other times, we may actually be called to forthright, bold action. Fr. John Baptist Metz puts it this way: "Certainly, Christianity is never just there for the very brave. Yet it is not we who define the demands of love, nor are we who fix conditions under which it is tested."³ It is the Lord who sets the terms and his message is clear. "Disciple, drop everything and follow – now!"

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Where do you sense God's urgent call to you in your life?
- ◆ What new *places* has the Lord taken you in your life?
- ◆ What *costs* have you incurred as a result of being a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- ◆ How has your experience of God interrupted your life?

¹John F. Meier, **A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus**, Volume III, *Companions and Competitors*, (New York), Doubleday, 2001, pp. 54-72.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, **The Cost of Discipleship** (New York, London), Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, 1957. pp. 43-56.

³Johann Baptist Metz, **The Emergent Church** (New York), Crossroad Publishing, 1981, pp. 14-15.

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Collaborate with other parishioners to start a Re-employment Network in your parish for those who are unemployed. For further information, contact Deacon Robert Pallotti at deaconofc@aol.com
- ◆ In the Archdiocese of Hartford, contact Catholic Charities at 860-548-0059 or nationally at www.catholiccharities.org to inquire as to how your small church community can get involved with efforts to provide support for immigrants.
- ◆ Write to your members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to promote every effort to take thousands of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons off *hair-trigger* alert status. Contact the Nuclear Threat Initiative at www.nti.org for further information.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel of the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the members: “What does Christ say to you/us in hearing this gospel today?” The community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention just a word or two that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally.)

*Following this sharing, members join in singing the **MusicQuest** selection, “Enter the Journey.” See p. 88 for lyrics. When the song is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)*

Leader: God, you who call us to follow your Son and our brother Jesus, guide, inspire and support us as we announce the in-breaking of your reign.

All: Support us when you ask us to travel to the new place you call us to, especially when we are frightened to go.

Leader: God of infinite variety, give us the grace to be open to people who are

different from ourselves.

All: May we be conscious that all we meet are made in your image and are deserving of great care.

Leader: God our Creator, may we look ever more appreciatively at your universe with all its beauty and diversity, and rejoice in the wonder of all creation.

All: Empower your people as co-workers to help build a world that celebrates the diversity of creation in working to remove all those things that separate people from one another in your church and the world. Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)