



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

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"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19

This Gospel draws a striking connection between the Christmas text and the initial events that marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It is the entire sweep of Jesus' life and work that inspires us with the great light seen by people that were living in darkness.

Take note of Matthew's point that Jesus fulfills a prophecy by beginning his ministry in Gentile territory. This is another way of saying that the mission of Jesus extends beyond Judea and into the whole world. This is the vision of our "one, holy, catholic, universal Church." No one is excluded from hearing the Good News.

Think of apostolic succession from generation to generation as a passing on of the baton. You can imagine what that looks like. You can see the change in the face of the person that takes the baton. New life replaces the old. One generation follows the next. It is the concept of emergence. In the Gospel today, we hear that John the Baptist has been arrested. But the spiritual movement to bring light to the world doesn't get extinguished. *"The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen."* People must be inspired and enlivened to grasp the profound truth that the remedy for death and darkness strides before them. Jesus is there to take the baton left by John's imprisonment. His disciples, in turn, are handed the baton. A new movement emerges and explodes on the scene -- The Jesus Movement. He seeks Simon and Andrew and says to them, *"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."* They leave their nets and followed him. It's very dangerous to do this. Powerful people are threatened. The Kingdom of Heaven is now; but not in the willfulness of the powers that be.

I have seen one parent lean down to correct a child, yet in place of anger, words flow that are so perfect and full of loving discipline. There, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. I have seen a man face death in such a way that it has no sting; the family standing around made mute, falling on their spiritual knees in speechless wonder and awe as they witness the Kingdom.

I have listened to penitents forgive a system that badly victimized and deeply wounded them. Yet they come before their redeemer; feel called to forgive the men and women in that system who were the unwitting accomplices. To forgive not out of weakness but because life and light were the only way life could be served, both in the penitent's heart and the hearts of those who wounded deeply. Again, the Kingdom is at hand.

Every day we see people leaning into life, coaxing it gently toward redemption. When we catch them at it we are attracted; we stop in our tracks and are drawn to it; drawn into it. As Hosea says, *"I will draw you with cords of love."* To be drawn into love -- that is the emergence of the Kingdom of Heaven, here and now.

In quietude let us reflect on being drawn upward, as we reach out and take the baton of life. In this glorified moment we change our posture from indifference to wisdom and fortitude. Let us courageously stride into a darkened world to bring light to a people in darkness. A land nearly overshadowed is instead once again flooded with the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,
he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea,
in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,
so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

*"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles-
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned."*

From that time Jesus began to proclaim,

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee,
he saw two brothers,
Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother,
casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And he said to them,

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

Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

As he went from there, he saw two other brothers,
James son of Zebedee and his brother John,
in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets,
and he called them.

Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues
and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom
and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

The Gospel of the Lord

