

## **Homily 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time (A)**

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My sisters and brothers in Christ,

In today's passage of the Gospel we see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy related to us in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading. The Prophet says: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone"

Isaiah prophesied that Zebulun and Naphtali, the lands first to be degraded, would be the first to see the light of God's salvation. Jesus fulfills that prophecy announcing the restoration of David's kingdom at precisely the place where the kingdom began to fall.

St. Matthew relates to us the beginning of Jesus' public life. Going to Capernaum, preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" and choosing his first Apostles: "As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew... James, ... and his brother John ... He called them and immediately they left their boat and their father and follow him..."

Jesus who is the Light of the world! As we say in the Creed referring to the Son of God: Light from light. He is the light of our lives because it is in Him that we find meaning for our life and following him we are sure that we are in the right path: a Journey of Faith, Hope and Love.

That is also what we say in today's Responsorial Psalm 27: "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?..."

“Jesus Christ, the light of the world, first called some simple men from Galilee. He infused new light into their lives, won them over to his cause and asked them for an unconditional commitment” In Conv. III. 16.2

“These men experienced the fascination of the hidden light that emanated from him, and they followed him without delay so that their path through life might shine with his brightness. But that light of Jesus shines out for everyone” JP II, 1/25/81

Today, once again, he calls us to participate with Him in bringing His light to the world. We have plenty of examples of darkness in our world: violence, war, the culture of death, injustice, etc. That is why we are called to be messengers of light in our world.

“Our Lord is calling us to come after him, and to enlighten men’s lives and their now noble activities with the light of faith. We are well aware that faith in Jesus Christ our Master and Lord, is the remedy for the many evils that afflict mankind. Without Christ men walk in darkness, so that they stumble and fall” In Conv. III, 16.2

If we can express in one word the reason for the decision to follow Jesus, we have to say that it is Faith. So today, still at the beginning of the New Year we are called to renew our faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is the first principle upon which every supernatural work is based. St. Augustine says: “Ground all of your works in faith, for the just man lives by faith and faith acts through love. May your works be based on faith; believing in God will make you faithful”

*I Believe* is the First article of the Creed and the New Catechism of the Catholic Church has a complete analysis of the virtue of faith. It is called: Man's Response to God.

The Catechism tells us that “by *faith*, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. It is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed...*” n. 150

Faith is a grace. Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. Faith is also a human act. “In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace’” n. 153 & ff.

As we consider the beginning of Jesus' public life and see the Faith of the first Apostles. Let's take a look at our own faith, because to follow Jesus Christ we need faith and to take the light of faith to others we need to know the truths of faith.

We need to live by faith. Let's ask ourselves if we are corresponding to the two calls in today's Gospel: Call to Conversion and to follow Jesus Christ.

We are to believe sincerely in God, in His omnipotence, in His saving Will as manifested in the supreme act of the Incarnation and in the Passion and Death of Christ, in the coming of the Holy Spirit, and in the mission of the Church.

But precisely because it is all this, faith is full of practical consequences. It is reflected in our conduct. It informs our whole life down to the last detail. We see things in the light of faith and act accordingly.

Following Jesus means moving from darkness to light. It involves a serious decision to allow every part of our life to be touched by Christ.

If we live by faith, then this year we'll be able to grow in the virtue of Hope, as Pope Benedict XVI has called us to do in his Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* about the virtue of hope.

“ “Hope”, the Holy Father says, is a key word in Biblical faith—so much so that in several passages the words “faith” and “hope” seem interchangeable ... “hope” is equivalent to “faith”.

He also says that hope is “a distinguishing mark of Christians the fact that they have a future... The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life’ n. 2

If our faith is alive, then we'll be consistent with the truths of faith; we'll be optimistic and positive in joyfully sharing our faith with others and we'll look for ways to foster unity in the Church as St. Paul's calls us to do in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of Today's Mass: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose”

Let's ask Mary, our Blessed Mother, Mother of God and our Mother, for her intercession to strengthen our faith that we all can follow Jesus and like the Apostles to bring the light of Christ, the Savior to the people of our time! To live as we believe, and to hope for a new life of faith in unity and peace. Amen