

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time A

January 26, 2020

We are the light of the world
by **Deacon Raymond Chan**

On September 30th 2019, Pope Francis decreed that the third Sunday of Ordinary Time henceforth will be celebrated as the Sunday of God's Word. Pope Francis points out clergies may celebrate this Sunday in different ways but mark it with solemnity, particularly highlighting the proclamation of the word of the Lord and the honour that is due. Pastors can show the importance of learning how to read, appreciate and pray daily with sacred Scripture, especially through the **practice of Lectio Divina** (Latin for "Divine Reading") which is a traditional monastic practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Lectio Divina has four separate steps: **read; meditate; pray; contemplate**. First a passage of scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God. The focus of *Lectio Divina* is not a theological analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with Christ as the key to their meaning. For example, using this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus preaches and says: "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" (Matthew 4:17). An analytical approach would focus on the reason for the statement made, the biblical context, etc. Does Jesus try John the Baptist's way to attract followers? In *Lectio Divina*, however, the practitioner "enters" and meditates on the meaning of repentance in his own sinful life rather than "dissecting" it. This leads the participant to pray for God's mercy and forgiveness. In some Christian teachings, this form of meditative prayer leads to an increased knowledge of Christ.

Proclaiming the Good News is not something left only to individual evangelist; it is in fact the task of the entire church. Ordinary Time is actually a season about proclamation and the power of God at work in God's people. In today's readings we come upon the same passage twice. In both *Isaiah* (8:23-9:3) and in the gospel from *Matthew* (4:12-23) we heard: "**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.**" The first is a prophecy. The second is a report. Isaiah said this would happen. Matthew reports that it did happen. Zebulun and Naphtali were in the northern part of Galilee. One of the cities there was Capernaum, the base of Jesus' operation. The four people who first experienced the Light were fishermen: Simon, later to be called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John. The Lord's call to them was so powerful that they immediately left everything. From the very beginning they were told that they would have a mission, they would become fishers of men. The people of Galilee and beyond, far beyond, would no longer walk in darkness.

But many of us still prefer to walk in darkness and do not want to know the truth. We do not want to know what happens in an abortion clinic, nor do we want to know how a woman's life is forever changed when the life within her is destroyed. We would rather stay in darkness and do not want to know about the 32-billion-dollar human trafficking industry. We don't want to hear or think about sexual slavery, much of which is generated by the porn industry. We don't want to hear how drugs, including marijuana, are destroying lives and our society. We hide behind the "everybody's doing it" and "the use is legalized by the government" argument. We who have been called by Christ to be his disciples have to have the courage to bring the light of His Truth to those who choose darkness.

There are also many people who are thrown into darkness due to no fault of their own: violence, injustice, prejudice, bullying, poverty, natural disasters, etc. The town of Utqiagvik, Alaska — the northernmost town in the US — experiences a polar night every year, beginning in mid-November and ending in mid-January. That means that once the sun sets in November, residents won't see daylight for two months. When darkness lasts so long we will begin to wonder whether daylight will ever return at all. But the residents of Utqiagvik have hope: in mid-May, the sun rises and does not set again for about 80 days. Christ has brought light to the life of all believers, but we still suffer in the darkness and oppression of a sinful world.

Remember both John the Baptist and Jesus preached: "**Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand.**" We can't be discouraged when it seems the darkness will never give way to dawn. Just had a \$100 yummy yummy 16oz prime rib: extremely flavourful, tenderness, and juiciness. Driving home, what's in your thought? What seasoning the chef added, aging period: three or six weeks, roasting temperature and time. Or are you reflecting on billions of people in the world cannot even have 2oz of rice or bread in a day and live in darkness. Are you praying for them and trying to share your God given treasure for those in need and bring light to them? Having a yummy prime rib is not a sin but not sharing your God given gifts and bring light to the world is. (*Lectio Divina* in daily life!) If we repent our sins, persevere in hope and help others to do the same, we'll not only enjoy eighty days of daylight, but an eternity. There are many things we can do to help others. We can love them, help them, let them know that they are not alone in the world. We can pray for them and with them. The world is beautiful for those who are in the light. We are in the light. We need to bring this light to others by letting them know about Jesus Christ who is alive and active in the world, that He loves them and is calling them to come into His Light. We have not been called to embrace a selfish relationship with the Lord, following Christ just for ourselves. We have been called so we can use our own unique gifts and talents for the Lord, to bring others to Christ. We must bring light to those in darkness. Like Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, we must become fishers of men, women, children and teens.

As Jesus said to us: "**You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp-stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.**" (Matthew 5:14-16)



Baptism preparation course
is given every **third Tuesday of the month.**

The next one will be on
February 17 at 7 PM.

The *Sacrament of Baptism*
will be celebrated on
February 9 & 23 at 2 PM.

"Have the courage to
be truly happy!"

Pope Francis



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