

- What is this “*land of Zebulun and Naphtali*” our first reading from the prophet Isaiah and the Gospel speak about.
- The land known as Israel was given to the patriarch Israel, more commonly known as Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Remember that Jacob = Israel, and Israel = Jacob.
- The nation of Israel was given to the man Israel’s descendants after the Exodus from Egypt...Israel then being roughly the area we know as Israel today.
- And the descendants of two of Israel’s 12 sons—Zebulun and Naphtali—was the northeast region of Israel
- The regions of Zebulun and Naphtali were thus situated sort of like New England and New York and Pennsylvania are in the U.S.
- And Isaiah calls it “a place of darkness” because by Isaiah’s time it was populated primarily by pagans, and the few Jews remaining had difficulty holding onto their ancestral faith and tradition.
- 
- Now by the time Jesus comes, this area of Israel was called Galilee...actually called “Galilee of the Gentiles” as we hear in the Gospel, because though mostly Jewish then, it was surrounded by Gentile peoples, and was looked down upon by many Jews because of Gentile cultural influences.
- Galilee was special because it was (and is) the most fertile region of Palestine, and thus it was also the most populous.
- Being surrounded by so many different cultures, Galileans were also a people open to new ideas.

2014

- Alexander the Great had romped through there a few hundred years before Jesus, and the classic Greek love of new ideas and philosophies was still prevalent in the area.
- 
- So, okay...highly populated. Open to new ideas. Is it any wonder why God chose this region for most of Jesus' teaching and works?
- It was here that Jesus could reach the most people most quickly in the few years He would be with us.
- And in our Gospel today, Matthew tells us that John the Baptist had been arrested, and Jesus takes up John's call: "*Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*"
- But Jesus takes the Gospel—the Good News—much further...to its highest fulfillment: preaching the Gospel of God's salvation for His people...that Jesus had come to lead us to God for eternity.
- John the Baptist was the "preface"...the introduction; Jesus is the real story.
- 
- The Gospel tells us that Jesus moves from Nazareth to Capernaum on the sea of Galilee—a very highly-populated area...making a definitive and symbolic break with His old, quiet life in Nazareth to His new public life and mission in bringing the Gospel to the world.
- ...and thus now we see the meaning of the prophecy: "*the people who sit in darkness* [in the lesser sense the Galileans; in the greater sense the whole world] *have seen a great light* [Jesus].
-

- Well...what should be our response to this great light which has risen for us?
- We read that Jesus calls Simon Peter and his brother Andrew... James and his brother John: *“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*
- They were nobody special...not rich...not educated...certainly not influential. Persons of no worldly importance whatsoever. Just hard-working fishermen. Oh...but what God had planned for them!
- 
- Now the Gospel of John tells us that this is not the first time these men had encountered Jesus.
- In fact, Andrew had already declared his faith that Jesus was the Messiah (Jn 1:41) and had introduced Peter to Him.
- But now Jesus comes to them and calls specifically: *“Follow me”*...and they make that conscious decision to stop living their routine, safe, comfortable lives...and drop their nets, and set off on a new life following Him.
- To do what? To heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to teach the way of God to those who do not know God.
- 
- Dcn Jim O’Hara has been introducing many of us to a wonderful book called “Forming Intentional Disciples”.
- The author reminds us that each of us has to make that same decision—to intentionally follow Christ in our lives.

2014

- Because Christianity is not simply a passive thing which happens to us; we have to actively choose and DO it.
- This is what Simon and Andrew, James and John, and millions of others have done over 2000 years—making that conscious choice to drop their nets and follow Jesus...to become intentional, purpose-filled disciples.
- 
- We can never repay God for His gifts to us...or for Jesus' sacrifice for us.
- St. Paul tells us: "*What have you that you did not receive?* (1Cor 4:7)
- How we express our gratitude and love for God most perfectly is by our fidelity and our service—fidelity to His teaching, and by leading others to Him through example and charity.
- And how does God respond? He grants us even greater gifts. Not money or power or fame, but rather things of infinitely more worth—His grace, His love, the fulfilment of His promise of salvation and eternal life.
- 
- And for this work He strengthens us with the gift of gifts, the Eucharist—the source and summit of our faith—the living truth, the Body and Blood of Jesus Himself—the incomparable source of grace and strength.
- It is by through and for the Eucharist that martyrs gone to their deaths rejoicing...that missionaries have braved desert and jungle and sea...that men and women have given their fortunes and their lives to follow Christ.

2014

- Because all of these, and millions of others, have realized the truth of Christ's words: *"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you..."* (John 6:27)
- And St. James tells us: *"...the sun rises...and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So will the rich [and we could add "the famous, the beautiful, the powerful] fade away..."* (James 1:11)
- Christians throughout these two millennia have realized the futility of working for the things of the world that we inevitably must lose, and the wisdom of pursuing that which we cannot lose.
- *"Remember, Man, that you are dust, and to dust you will return."*
- 
- We ALL must make that conscious choice to "drop our nets", or not...to become those intentional, purpose-filled disciples...or not.
- By Jesus' call to ordinary men, He shows us that we don't have to be brilliant, beautiful, wealthy or powerful to serve God.
- As St. Paul writes: *"...consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong..."* (1 Cor 1:26-27)
- 
- So this week think about what you like to do...what your gifts are. And then ask yourself: *"What can **I** do to serve God and my neighbor? How can **I** drop the nets of my daily routine even for a little while and follow Jesus wholeheartedly?"*

- Discipleship is not a physical state; it is an activity. Let no one here think that God has not called you to His service; by the very fact that you are here He calls you to Himself and is giving you a mission.
- Mass ends right after communion because you are not given the Eucharist as simply a sterile token, but rather by it God strengthens you to go on your mission to spread the Gospel to the world.
- The final sentence of the Declaration of Independence reads: “... *with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor*” ...this to establish a nation under God.
- Should we not be ready to do at least as much for God Himself?
- 
- So make that leap into active discipleship...that leap of faith.
- ...and you'll find a fulfillment...a joy...an adventure...that you would have never have believed possible.

## Reading 1

[Is 8:23-9:3-1](#)

First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun  
and the land of Naphtali;  
but in the end he has glorified the seaward road,  
the land west of the Jordan,  
the District of the Gentiles.

Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:  
for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.  
The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
a light has shone.  
You have brought them abundant joy  
and great rejoicing,  
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,  
as people make merry when dividing spoils.  
For the yoke that burdened them,  
the pole on their shoulder,  
and the rod of their taskmaster  
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

[Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14](#)

## Responsorial Psalm

**R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

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?

**R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

**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.**

**R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

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.

**R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

[1 Cor 1:10-13, 17](#)

**Reading 2**

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.**

For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters,  
by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you.

I mean that each of you is saying,  
"I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos,"  
or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

Is Christ divided?

Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel,  
and not with the wisdom of human eloquence,  
so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

[Mt 4:12-23](#)

**Gospel**

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.

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**

[Mt 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, 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.”

