

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
(Isaiah 8:23; 9:3 / Matthew 4:12-23)
25.01.2026

Sunday of the Word of God and last day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the gospel passage from Saint Matthew that we have just heard, Jesus makes his first public appearance.

John the Baptist has been arrested. He will not preach or baptize any longer.

Jesus now begins his ministry.

Every detail of this narrative suggests that, with Jesus beginning his ministry, something new is happening! New life is appearing!

John spoke in the desert, a dry and austere landscape. Jesus leaves Nazareth and moves to Capernaum, to the shore of the lake, a green and beautiful setting.

Up until this point, Jesus had preached in Jewish synagogues and had not moved among pagans. From now on, Jesus will be in the Galilee of the Nations, a region where both Jews and pagans live side by side. Capernaum is a crossroads. From now on, Jesus will preach to both Jews and Gentiles. His words will spread far and wide. Clearly, as Jesus begins his public ministry, something new is really happening!

Capernaum was a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. Matthew cannot resist quoting the famous prophecy of Isaiah heard in today's first reading:

“Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea on the far side of the Jordan, Galilee of the nations! The people that lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land of shadow and death a light has dawned”.

In that prophecy, what is striking is the sharp contrast between darkness, the land of shadow and death, and light, and even a **great** light! Before Jesus or without Jesus, it was darkness! With Jesus a great light arises. This is not surprising because Jesus is the Light of the world.

If we look at our personal lives, we know only too well what darkness is. We experience darkness in our personal relationships, in politics, in the dealings between nations, not to mention natural disasters, huge migrations, sicknesses, unemployment, financial difficulties... Jesus invites us to repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. What is the kingdom of heaven if not Jesus himself? In other words, Jesus invites us to turn our gaze toward Him who is the Light of the world. He proposes something new. He invites us to hope; and to walk in hope with Him from darkness to light, whatever our darkness may be.

But how can we find the Light, how can we find Christ who is the Light, the Light we all long for? This third Sunday of Ordinary Time in the liturgical year is also the Sunday dedicated to the Word of God. This is a tradition inaugurated by Pope Francis a decade ago and now well established. A sure path to the Light we long for is to set aside time each day for prayerful reading of the Scriptures, through the practice we call *Lectio Divina*. To take time to listen to

God and to do what he tells us to do. To take time to receive from God the way which leads from darkness to light.

In the Word of God, we are invited to love, to love our neighbour, all our neighbours without exception. To love our neighbour is to respect them and to serve them. What is true in our personal relationships is also true in the relationships between nations, between Churches and between the world religions.

In the Word of God, we learn that every human being was created out of love by their heavenly Father. The consequence is that they should all live together and love one another as brothers and sisters, and not as strangers, or enemies. We should love others whatever their skin colour, their gender or sexual orientation, whatever their nationality, their social background, their political affiliation or preference, whatever their Church denomination or their religion, whether they are believers or unbelievers.

From the Word of God, we learn to trust others and not to fear them,

By the word of God we are invited not to abuse others with force, power, violence and wars, but to enter into dialogue with them in order to know them, understand them and work with them, searching together the common good. Some people have an ego at the size of the cosmos. They abuse others with their flashing but petty ideologies. The world is not short of examples of such people, perhaps beginning with ourselves on some occasions.

Each line of the Word of God can be a source of Light for our lives which are so often marked by darkness. It can be a source of light if only we listen to it and put it into practice.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus called disciples to follow Him, to preach the Good News with Him, to invite all of us to repent and follow Jesus. At the end of the week of prayer for Christian Unity, I would like to highlight a few words of today's gospel "Jesus saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter and his brother Andrew. Jesus said to them: follow me and I will make you fishers of men". Today, Peter's successor is Pope Leo, bishop of Rome. Andrew preached the gospel in Byzantium, now Constantinople, and is considered the spiritual predecessor of Patriarch Bartholomew.

Peter and Andrew were brothers who were chosen by Christ to walk and work together with Him. Pope Leo and Patriarch Bartholomew represent two authentic and legitimate traditions within the one Church. The differences between them are not a threat, but a richness. Together they form a beautiful mosaic. Their differences accepted and respected illustrate the beauty of their togetherness.

This is important to note as we pursue our Christian pilgrimage toward the visible unity of the Church. We are called to love, serve and respect all our brothers and sisters who were baptised in Christ. Our unity, which is not uniformity, but unity in legitimate diversity is the powerful testimony that we can give to a world in search of the meaning of life. Our unity, our desire for unity is already a sign of the kingdom of heaven at work in the world today.

May we repent by coming back to Jesus who leads us on the path toward unity, the unity of the Church. May the Church engaged on the path to full and visible unity be a ferment of reconciliation and peace in the world!