

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

Psalms 27:1, 4, 13–14

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Matthew 4:12–23 or 4:12–17



## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

### January 22, 2023



### REFLECTION

We “follow” people on social media for a whole variety of reasons—for entertainment, information, curiosity, voyeurism, or validation for our own choices and opinions. We are able to control and filter all of our interactions with the people we “follow.”

What did it mean for the disciples to follow Jesus? They left all the safe things in their lives behind to follow him, without any assurances of where it would take them or how much he would challenge them. Something about Jesus inspired their trust, and that was enough.

This is the unique challenge and promise at the core of Christianity. Our faith is not a set of rules or an abstract set of ideas about a distant God. It is a relationship with a person. Following Jesus is not like “following” someone on social media! We cannot have a relationship with Christ by trying to control him or filter his words to fit neatly into our existing ideologies and identities. He calls each of us personally, individually. He is calling you to come and follow him and get to know him. What will your response be?



### ACTION

Ask Jesus to prepare you to answer his call when it comes. Visit the *Vocations Network website* (<https://vocationnetwork.org/en/main>) and read some of the stories of people called to the priesthood or religious life. Find out when your diocese holds vocations retreats. If there is a religious order near you, consider visiting to learn more about the different ways God continues to call people in our modern world.

### Learn more about vocations

from Fr. Mike Schmitz:

[https://www.youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJz9)

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**PbaklZY**



### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What has it meant in your life to follow Jesus?
- ❖ How can we recognize God’s call in our lives?



January 22, 2023

# THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #67A

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

Psalms 27:1, 4, 13–14

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Matthew 4:12–23 or 4:12–17

## Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

### Leader's Context

As we are just getting into the swing of Ordinary Time, today's passage from the Gospel of Matthew marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Just before this passage, Jesus was baptized by John (Matthew 3:13–17) and then was tempted for forty days in the desert (4:1–11). As is the case for the first half of today's passage, Matthew's Gospel often includes details that reinforce the continuity in message as well as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The second half of today's Gospel tells of the call of the first disciples. When Jesus calls them, they are invited to re-envision themselves as a "fishers of men." We are all called to be disciples, to be followers of Christ in word and deed. More than just "belief," the call of discipleship is lived out in every area of our lives.

**Q FOCUS:** *We are called to discipleship.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week we celebrate the feast days of two Doctors of the Church, St. Francis de Sales (January 24) and St. Thomas Aquinas on January 28. The status "Doctor of the Church" recognizes a saint's significant contribution to theology through their research and writing. Francis is remembered for his continued drive to help everyone understand their call to holiness. His writings include *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, and are addressed to laity and reflect a gentle spirituality that shines light on the path of

lived faith. The prolific writings of Thomas Aquinas are scholarly works of philosophy and theology that emphasize the unity of both faith and reason. Aquinas is known for the way he systematically makes an argument for the existence of God.

### Church Teaching Connection

"You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world" (*Gaudete et exultate*, 23).

## Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

### Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Matthew 4:12–23

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

► **How well do you handle change? In your experience, what helps to make for a good transition?**

Today's passage marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in the Gospel of Matthew. This Gospel is especially designed to highlight the continuity and fulfillment of the covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament through the life, teaching, and ministry of Jesus, culminating in his death and resurrection. We notice that continuity in the words Jesus uses as he begins preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). These are the same words we heard from John the Baptist during Advent (Matthew 3:2). But the transition

from John to Jesus isn't repackaging the same material. In his ministry, Jesus will break open the meaning of repentance, forgiveness of sins, and the kingdom of heaven while he himself brings it about.

► **What do you make of Jesus' clever play on words; what is the difference between being professional fishermen and being fishers of men?**

Notice that it is Jesus who calls the first of his disciples, not the other way around. While it was common for a rabbi (or teacher) to have followers, the standard procedure was for a student to choose a mentor, not the other way around. This is a dynamic we see repeatedly throughout Scripture because it is always God who takes the initiative to pull on our hearts, to prompt us, to reveal himself to us. Our faith is a response to God's invitation to know and love him. Just as Jesus calls Andrew, Simon (Peter), James, and John, he also calls us to discipleship.

► **There is an important difference between belief and discipleship. How do you understand that difference?**

We are called by God to be disciples; to live out our faith in word and deed, to be morally good, to act with justice, and to bring the good news of God's love to everyone we encounter in our daily lives. Being on the path of discipleship doesn't mean never making mistakes. Rather, the expectation is that you continue to try to do what is right, and you take responsibility and seek forgiveness when you fail. It's more of a lifelong journey than a one-time decision, and it often leads to the unexpected. Until their encounter with him, Andrew, Peter, James, and John probably thought they would continue to be professional fishermen. Instead, Jesus called them to a whole new, unexpected way of life; to leave behind their old ways of being in the world and re-envision their identity as disciples of Christ.

► **What "ways of being" would contemporary Christians your age need to leave behind to be on the path of discipleship?**

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 112.

**We are all called to be disciples of Jesus Christ.**

**Christian discipleship involves more than just belief.**

**Discipleship is a whole way of life, lived out in word and deed.**

## Act on the Word

### Called to Holiness

For this activity, you will need to print copies of select paragraphs (chapter 1/paragraphs 3–34) of *Gaudete et exsultate*, available online through the Vatican’s website.

In his 2018 apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis discusses discipleship by unpacking the unique way we are called to follow God in our daily lives. Take time to read and discuss this document with the teens. The tone and flow of the document makes it both understandable and applicable. This week, explore chapter 1 (paragraphs 3–34); next week, continue this discussion by examining the section on the beatitudes in chapter 3 (paragraphs 63–94).

Whether you read aloud or provide time for independent reading, have the teens mark their copy of the document by underlining or highlighting statements that personally resonate or are particularly relevant to the lives of young people today.

As time allows, invite discussion:

- ✳ In paragraphs 3–9, what different groups of people are recognized as witnesses to holiness? In your own life, whom do you recognize as part of the “middle class of holiness” (7).

- ✳ In paragraphs 10–18, has your own understanding of holiness and discipleship reflected “each in their own way” or has it been more akin to “one size fits all”? Which of the suggested actions or gestures do you find most applicable to your life?

- ✳ In paragraphs 19–24, what message does your life speak to the world? What encouragement can you take from Pope Francis?

- ✳ In paragraphs 25–31, how do the activities you do help nurture holiness? How do they distract from holiness?

- ✳ In paragraphs 32–34, how does holiness make us more alive and more human?

As the conversation concludes, invite the teens to identify a specific action they can commit to doing to cultivate holiness this week.

### Closing Prayer

*In every age, O God,*

*you have called men and women to follow  
the path of your Son, Jesus Christ.*

*Give us the courage to follow his example  
in all things*

*and to serve others without prejudice  
or exception.*

*Through Jesus Christ your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,*

*God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.