

Read

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Matthew 4:12–23 or 4:12–17

LIVING THE WORD

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 25, 2026



REFLECTION

Today's Gospel reading marks the radiant beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah of the light dawning in darkness. Jesus is characterized as the radiant presence stepping into the shadows, dispelling their darkness with the brilliance of God's truth.

Throughout today's reading, we see that Jesus begins his ministry by calling for repentance. This repentance and obedience to Jesus' word leads to transformation and, eventually, entrance into the radiant reality of God's kingdom, where sins find forgiveness, and lives are renewed.

Each of us has dark corners of our lives that crave the cleansing illumination of Christ's light. Repentance allows us to turn towards God's grace, letting his light heal us and dispel the shadows.

Though there is more darkness in winter as the days are shorter, we know that they are now getting a little bit longer each day. Let's embrace the imagery in today's reading and allow Jesus' presence to be the light of love that penetrates our hearts, bringing illumination to the path that leads us to God's kingdom.



ACTION

Explore your artistic side this week and express the theme of light conquering darkness through visual art. Think about what light means to you and how it connects with the Gospel reading and your experiences. Use whatever art form appeals to you—painting, drawing, digital art, photography, or a mix. How does engaging with the idea of transformative light affect your understanding of the imagery in today's Gospel?



"My Light"

—Colton Dixon

<https://youtu.be/xrpaQv67wic>

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How can you respond to Jesus' call for repentance and to follow him?
- ❖ Can you think of a time when Christ's teachings shed light on and brought clarity to a problem in your life?



January 25, 2026
**THIRD SUNDAY
 IN ORDINARY TIME**

LECTIONARY #67A

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

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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

Today's Gospel still sees Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. After Christ receives baptism, he withdraws to the desert. This week's gospel picks up immediately following Christ's forty days and nights in the desert. John the Baptist disappears from the narrative for now (he is arrested) and Jesus' ministry is brought to the forefront. His ministry begins in Capernaum, an important location that Matthew calls attention to by referencing the prophet Isaiah's words about how a light would rise from this region (see today's first reading). Jesus will spend much of his ministry in this area and many of his first apostles are from there. Jesus asks them to leave everything and follow him, and they do. He gives them a new mission, to help him proclaim the kingdom and draw others to a deeper faith in God.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus asks us to follow him and help in the work of proclaiming the kingdom of heaven.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On January 27, we remember St. Angela Merici (1474–1540). She had passion for following Jesus and for educating young girls. Toward the end of her life, she founded the Company of St. Ursula, an order of women dedicated to living in the world (instead of in a convent) and to teaching. On January 28, we

remember another saint who was passionate about teaching, St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas is remembered for his keen theological insight, as well as his depth of spiritual awareness. His theological writings are still important texts for the Church today. He is a Doctor of the Church.

Church Teaching Connection

“Let us think about what Jesus said to them [the first disciples]: I will make you fishers of men. He was speaking to fishermen, using the language they understood. Their lives changed on the spot. He called them where they were and as they were, in order to make them sharers in his mission. ‘Immediately they left their nets and followed him’ (v. 20). Why immediately? Simply because they felt drawn. They did not hurry off because they had received an order, but because they were drawn by love. To follow Jesus, mere good works are not enough; we have to listen daily to his call” (Pope Francis, Homily, January 26, 2020).

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:

Today we hear Matthew's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. After his baptism by John and then spending forty days being tempted by Satan in the desert, Jesus now goes to Capernaum, in the northern part of the region of Galilee. This region may not seem significant in any way to us, but Matthew clues his readers in on its importance. He draws on the words of the prophet Isaiah that talk about this geographical area being the place where

God's light will shine bright in the darkness. Thus, Matthew shows us that Jesus is fulfilling prophecies from the Old Testament. Once there, Jesus preaches about repentance and the kingdom of heaven.

► **Why do you think Matthew's readers needed to hear about the connection between Jesus and the prophecies of the Old Testament?**

► **In what ways do you think Jesus' message of repentance was a light in the darkness?**

Connecting Jesus to the prophets of the Old Testament and their prophecies shows that Jesus is fulfilling all that God had promised to his people. In this case, Jesus is the ultimate light in the darkness of the world that is separated from God by its sin. In the kingdom of heaven there is no darkness, only the light of God's radiance shining on all.

► **What are some ways that young people can bring light into dark situations in their homes, schools, and communities?**

At the end of today's reading, we learn about the many things Jesus does in his ministry. He preaches and teaches, proclaims God's kingdom, and cures the sick. Jesus does not do this work of sharing the news of the kingdom of God alone. We also hear about the call of his first disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John, in today's reading. Jesus asks them to leave their jobs as fishermen to follow him. He doesn't give them any reason to follow him, only saying, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” This must seem like a strange request! But they immediately leave their nets and boats to follow him. James and John even leave their father behind.

► **Why do you think Peter, Andrew, James, and John immediately leave everything to follow him?**

► **How do you think you would have reacted in that situation?**

Just as he called those first disciples, Jesus calls his disciples nowadays—us—to come and follow him. Sometimes it can be challenging for us to leave the path we think we are supposed to be following to follow the one Jesus has for us. We can prepare our hearts for this kingdom work by repenting of our sins, so that there are less things standing in the way

of giving our hearts to Jesus. Then our light will shine bright like Christ's and others will come to follow him as well.

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 124.

Jesus fulfills God's plan of salvation.

Jesus offers the apostles and us an invitation to a new life by following him.

Following Christ can be challenging, but when we do, we are able to share his light with others.

Act on the Word

Safe on the Boat

For this activity, you will need a large space with several chairs (enough for all the teens, minus one) gathered in the middle. You will also need music and a way to play the music.

Begin the activity by setting up the room to play a game of musical chairs, with the chairs clustered together in the middle (facing outward so teens can sit on them). Inform the teens that these chairs are their boats, and unlike the disciples in today's Gospel, their goal is to get back on their boats. Begin playing the game as usual, having the teens walk around the chairs until the youth minister stops the music. The teens should immediately find a seat and sit down. The person who does not have a seat is out. One chair is removed, and the music starts again. The game continues until there is only one person and one chair: the winner.

When the game is finished, invite the teens to reflect on the game in light of today's Gospel. The goal of this game was to make it back to the safety of the "boat" so they wouldn't get out. But in the Gospel reading, the disciples left the safety of their boats and everything they knew and took a leap of faith to follow Jesus. Have the teens share their thoughts on how they can get the courage to leave the safety of their typical way of life to follow where Jesus might be leading them. What might be stopping them? How can they support one another to take that leap of faith? Encourage them to follow Jesus outside of their comfort zone this week. Maybe they are being asked to reach out to a new student. Maybe they are being called to invite someone to church. The possibilities are endless when one is following Jesus!

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 Christ our Lord.
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. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.