

The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year A –  
21/22 January 2017 – 11:00 AM Rite of Welcome of  
Candidates/ Continuation of a Week of Prayer for Christian  
Unity/ Roe v. Wade and Defense of the Unborn 22 January 2017 –  
(5:00 PM and 9:00 AM Masses only)  
– Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –  
HOMILY

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:**

Isaiah 8:23-9:3

- “First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the end he has glorified the seaward road, . . . 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; . . . You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, . . . 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.”

**Responsorial Psalm:**

Psalm 27 - *Sung*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:**

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

- “I urge you, . . . 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, . . . that there are rivalries among you. . . . Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? . . . 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.”

**GOSPEL:**

**MATTHEW 4:12-23**

- “When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee . . . that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: . . . 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, . . . they were fishermen. . . .

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“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. . . . 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.”

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i. Just a few short weeks ago, we heard a portion of that first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed as we came together Christmas Eve night: “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, . . . 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.” We celebrated . . . rejoiced . . . remembered the breadth and the depth of God’s great love for us by sending us a Savior . . .

Now . . . now we have moved into the time of the “adult” Jesus . . . the “grown-up” Jesus . . . a time to understand, more fully, the impact and meaning of that “Christmas event” . . .

The evangelist Matthew repeats what the Prophet Isaiah wrote to, first, reinforce the firm conviction of believers that Jesus **is** the fulfillment of what the people of Israel longed for, the fulfillment of all believers.

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But, simply repeating the passage from the Prophet Isaiah to prove this is not enough. Just how is it Jesus fulfills the deepest longing of the people of Israel . . . how is it he fulfills **our** longing? . . . yours . . . mine . . . others?

He does so by announcing the presence of the “kingdom of heaven” . . . present in his very being . . . Jesus . . . the one who has joined heaven and earth together by his coming as a man . . . he announces this and calls for a “clearing away” . . . a clearing away of everything in the lives of all who hear his message that might hinder them from not only experiencing the freedom of his message . . . but recognizing the importance of the One in their very midst . . . “Repent” . . . “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

I know that such a call to “repentance”, for so many of us, might seem a bit too premature. After all, “repentance” seems to be the focus of Lent, and we are not quite there yet. But, if we understand it to mean more than something simply related to the existence of evil; the presence of sin in our lives . . . if we understand this to be about clearing away . . .

about making room and space in our lives . . . in our minds and hearts . . . so that we are able to not only **hear** the Lord's call . . . but be so **attracted** to His call that not only do we readily **make a place for the Lord right at the center of our lives** but, as a result, even today, some 2,000 years later . . . we will be better able and equipped to understand exactly just what it is the Lord is calling each of us to do . . . for he does continue to call . . .

III. In 1975, on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, the late Pope Paul VI wrote, in what is called an "Apostolic Exhortation" and titled in English, "*Proclaiming the Gospel*", "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church." It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection."

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This past Wednesday evening, nearly 50 individuals, most of who have been gathering faithfully for the past several weeks, to experience the “relit” series, explored answers to the question, “Why Evangelize?” . . . and this particular quote from the late Pope was mentioned a few times . . . along with other similar statements from Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and our current Pope, Pope Francis . . .

The conversation of those gathered was lively . . . but more than that . . . “Spirited” . . . and “Spirit filled” . . . one participant cited that they were really caught by the notion that the **Church** . . . which translated means **all of the baptized** . . . **exists** to evangelize . . . the **Church**, you and me and others . . . **exists** to bring others either to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ or lead them to Christ for the first time . . . Actually, caught doesn’t do their statement justice . . . they were surprised . . . and perhaps, rightly so . . . since this is something we Catholics don’t often talk about it . . . in fact, as the conversation went on, for years, so many have thought . . . “Well . . . isn’t that why we have priests and deacons and women and men religious and pastoral ministers and directors of

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religious education and youth ministers . . . isn't that their job?" . . . and it most definitely is my job . . . this fraternity of ministers' job . . . but . . . the **Church** is more than just this small, committed and dedicated fraternity of ministers . . . it is ***all of the baptized*** . . . SO, TALK ABOUT IT WE MUST . . . EVANGELIZE . . . WE MUST . . .

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is not something any of us can keep to ourselves . . . our relationship with Jesus Christ is not something we can store away . . . our relationship with Jesus Christ is not something that is private . . . personal, yes . . . but not private . . . our relationship with Jesus Christ is **the best news there is for it tells us, as believers, just where we are headed because of Jesus Christ . . . because of our relationship with him . . . and where we are headed is to . . . ETERNAL LIFE . . . COMPLETE COMMUNION WITH GOD . . .** The ***Church's essential mission . . . it's reason for existing is to let others know about this good news . . . to help them "clear things away" for the kingdom of heaven continues to be at hand . . .***

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**Not** share that . . . **Not** live that . . . **Not** to bring this to others or, for that matter, help to bring them to Christ . . . is contrary to what the Lord asks . . .

Jesus did not just walk up to Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John and the others that day and say, “Hey, what’s goin’ on? Oh, you’re fishing . . . good . . . enjoy . . . catch ya’ later!” . . . No, he was clear . . .

**“I’m here for a reason . . . so drop what you are doing and come and follow me . . . I’ve got something much, much greater than fishing for you to do . . . I need you . . . and you need me.” . . .** And he went to work . . . teaching and preaching and healing and forgiving and doing all that he could . . . **with** that rag-tag group with him so that they would know what it was they **would have to do** once he was no longer physically present . . .

**IV.** It was the twelve of them then, but it is all of us, **now!**

Some weeks from now, you and I will hear the Lord’s words, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all



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the nations . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit . . . and know that I am with you until the end of the ages.” . . .

But, each and every time we gather . . . we hear a similar **command** . . . we gather in song and in prayer . . . we hear him speak in Scripture . . . calling to us . . . wanting to shape us and fashion us to do the work we are called to do . . . we speak words like, **“Lord, have mercy!”** . . . reminding us how incredible God’s love for us is . . . **“Thanks be to God”** . . . grateful for the Word God continues to speak to us . . . **“Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ!”** . . . grateful for what the Lord did so that we might find out way, through Him, back to God . . . we proclaim publicly all we believe . . . believe the Father, the Son and the Spirit to be . . . all we believe on how we are to live out our lives . . . we come to Jesus Christ and take in His very body and blood and we say . . . with confidence and certainty and conviction . . . **AMEN!** . . . **AMEN!** . . . not a timid, soft-spoken response . . . but a bold proclamation on our part . . . awestruck by the reality that He continues to feed us . . . continues to nourish us . . . continues to love us . . . continues to be present with us . . . no matter what . . . in so great

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a sacrament . . . and then, **THEN** we are sent . . . sent from this gathering to do **some thing** with all we have been given . . . all we have received . . . **“Go in peace . . . glorifying the Lord by your lives”** . . .

Yes, we are sent forth to **evangelize** . . . to share good news . . . be good news . . . give good news . . . the good news of Jesus Christ to others . . .

Put Jesus at the center of your life . . . take Jesus in day after day . . . week after week . . . but remember . . . the life-line each of us has been given . . . is the life-line others hunger for . . . do what the Lord calls you to . . . others are longing for Him . . .