

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #67

READING I Isaiah 8:23—9:3

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

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.

Proclaim in an informative tone.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Zebulun = ZEB-yoo-luhn

Naphtali = NAF-tuh-li

Gentiles = JEN-tīls

Proclaim with more intensity.

Transition your tone to one of hope.

Great news! Let the assembly hear happiness
in your voice.

Take your time and clearly proclaim your
word endings.

Midian = MID-ee-uhn

READING I

In the eighth century BC, the ever-expanding and brutal Assyrian empire invaded the northern kingdom of Israel, beginning with the conquest of the territories of Zebulun and Naphtali. The Assyrian military brought such devastation to land and people that darkness seemed to enshroud everything. Yet in that time of darkness Isaiah announces that the gloom will be transformed to light. Though the people are still suffering, Isaiah uses verbs that sound as if the darkness has already been dispelled. So certain is the promise of God's saving action that Isaiah

and other prophets frequently speak as if it were already accomplished.

The first biblical reference to darkness occurs in the creation account when darkness covers the abyss. God's word, "Let there be light," was the first act of creation. In another manifestation of divine creative power, God will dispel all the darkness, gloom, and distress in which war-torn Israel dwells. The darkness is both individual and universal, for war has brought chaos to family life, the trampling of crops, political and societal upheaval, and feeling abandoned by God. Isaiah's hopeful words seem to suggest

that God's voice will again be heard in the darkness, "Let there be light," assuring that the dawn of a new day has come.

In the second part of Isaiah's prophecy, he speaks directly to the Lord who is the source of light. God's gift of light brings such abundant joy that Isaiah uses three images to describe it. First, the people's joy is comparable to the rejoicing at harvest time. When the land has been crushed by war, its restored fruitfulness brings great celebration. In a second image, the people make merry in dividing spoils. Rather than being plunged into the darkness of defeat,

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 (1a)

R. 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?

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.

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.

READING II 1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

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.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhn-z

Proclaim St. Paul's letter with a sense of
urgency. There are rivalries brewing.

Chloe = KLOH-ee

Choose a different inflection with each name.

Apollos = uh-POL-uhs

Cephas = SEE-fuhs

Pause for emphasis after each question.

Proclaim with a tone of firmness and
authority.

they rejoice in the rewards of victory. The final image for rejoicing is the relief of being freed from the weight of yoke, pole, and rod, all instruments of servitude and oppression. Just as God had freed their ancestors from Midian long ago, in the time of the judge Gideon, God will again rescue Israel from whatever and whoever may oppress them.

READING II Beginning with the opening chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses a major problem in the Corinthian community: lack

of unity. He uses both positive and negative terminology, seeming to nudge the community to look at the situation from multiple angles. Paul summarized the positive perspective in the verse just before today's reading, telling the church that they have been called into fellowship (*koinonia*) with Christ. Since communion with Christ is at the heart of their faith, believers should agree in what they say, and be united in mind and purpose. The unity of speech, mind, and purpose that Paul is promoting is not referring to agreement of nonessential aspects of life, where individual prefer-

ences and insights add to the rich fabric of the community. Rather, Paul is writing about oneness rooted in their common faith in Christ and manifest in their loving, respectful relationships with one another.

Paul has learned of the opposite, negative speech and behavior from Chloe's people. Only in this text do we hear of Chloe who was probably the head of one of the house churches in Corinth. Members of her household inform Paul of the divisions (*schismata*) and rivalries among believers. They may be telling him about divisions in their own small community or