

Cycle A Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 IS 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, 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.

Responsorial Psalm PS 27:1, 4, 13-14

R. (1a) 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?

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

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.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

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.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Reading 2 1 COR 1:10-13, 17

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.

Gospel MT 4:12-23

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.

Today the Scriptures tell us that God loves us so much He invites us to consider the "bigger picture"...to recognize that God has a vision that can sustain and nurture us in all crisis situations throughout His Creation. In Isaiah, the prophet reflects on the northern kingdom of Israel who suffered the anguish of invasion and separation. Their situation was dire, but God breaks the yoke of the oppressor and shines a great light on the people. In Corinthians, St. Paul challenges us to live according to the vision offered of life in Christ Jesus, a vision that allows us to come together, dispel division and live in agreement. In the Gospel, Jesus enters the daily life of his future disciples and asks them to follow him to be fishers of men. His vision will help them, and us, to understand what we need to become builders of the kingdom that will change the world.

As I was thinking about God's vision this week, I couldn't help but remember my family gathering Christmas in Asheville, NC six years ago. All 8 of us, our 2 sons and their wives, our 2 grandsons, Pat and I, we were there to greet Phoebe, our granddaughter, when she was born Dec 28, 2016. 6 lbs, 14 oz. 19 1/2" long. Did I mention she is still beautiful and perfect? Well there's nothing like a children and grandchildren to get us thinking about the bigger picture of how we are fulfilling, or rather not fulfilling, God's vision for the His Creation. It doesn't take much thought to know that with all our abundance, we are missing the mark. Nature has been mistreated. But I also think we have the vision for the solutions that sustain and nurture us in all crisis situations throughout His Creation.

Pope Francis in his 2nd encyclical Laudato Si: On Care For Our Common Home, showed us a hopeful vision...one that will help to direct our efforts to address the crises that we face in our world today. Pope Francis addressed "*every person living on this planet*," calling the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our Environmental and Economic and Social challenges...and to join him in embarking on a new path.

To understand why Pope Francis wrote this encyclical, we need to understand the influences that shaped his thinking. 30 years ago in 1986 Father Jorge Mario Bergoglio, as Pope Francis was previously known, was sent to Germany to begin his doctoral studies. The focus of his research was the great 20th century theologian and cultural critic Romano Guardini. Though he never finished his doctoral degree, Bergoglio's immersion in the writings of Guardini decisively shaped his thinking. You may have heard that much of the commentary on Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si* has focused on the issue of global warming. Some people have dismissed the encyclical because they say the Pope supports various political views. But these opinions miss the forest for one very particular tree: the influence of Romano Guardini and his distinctive take on modern life.

“Guardini loved to vacation in Italy, and he took particular delight in the lake region around Milan. He was enchanted, of course, by the physical beauty of the area, but what intrigued him above all was the manner in which people had interacted non-invasively and respectfully with nature. One example was how the homes along Lake Como imitated the lines and rhythms of the landscape. But by the 1920's, he had begun to notice change all around. Homes being built were not only larger, but more “aggressive,” indifferent to the surrounding environment, no longer accommodating themselves to the natural setting.”

It is only against this background that we can properly read the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si*. Francis' vision is in the great context of a Theology of Nature and an Ecology of Humanity that stands apart from the typical modern point of view: He recognized *“that the earth has become piled with filth, that pollution adversely affects the health of hundreds of millions but especially the poor, that we live in a “throwaway” culture, that human life is treated with indifference, that huge populations have little access to clean drinking water, that thousands of animal species are permitted to fall into extinction, and yes, even that we live in housing that bears no organic relation to the natural*

environment. Pope Francis wants us to recover a proper sensibility, where we are integrated into relationship with the world that surrounds us.”

What strikes the Pope as self-evident is that the nature we have attempted to dominate for the past several centuries, has now turned against us. As he put it, “*God always forgives; human beings sometimes forgive; but when nature is mistreated, she never forgives.*”

Let us bow our heads and pray for God’s blessings.

Dear Lord, you are our light and our salvation, help us to see with your vision the solutions that sustain and nurture us in all situations of crisis, suffering and loss throughout your Creation. Break our yokes of despair. Gather us together united without division, so that we may become builders of your kingdom and better stewards of your Creation. Help us to change our world for the better starting right here in Georgia, at St Andrew’s, in our homes, and at work...it’s for Phoebe, and all our children. Amen.