



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time Children's Liturgy of the Word

This Sunday is called the *Sunday of the Word of God*. The readings highlight Christ as the light that shines in darkness. They call us to repentance, unity, and discipleship, especially during the more difficult times of our lives.

The prophet Isaiah gives hope to people who once lived in darkness—Zebulun, Naphtali, and Galilee. He says the people who walked in darkness will see a great light. This prophecy comes true when Jesus moves to Capernaum in Galilee, a region with many different people, bringing light to those living in the shadow of death. Our Psalm response, "The Lord is my light and my salvation," encourages the believer to trust in and be patient with God.

Jesus starts preaching, "Turn away from your sins, because the kingdom of heaven is near." He calls simple fishermen—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—to "follow me... [and] fish for people." They immediately leave their nets and families, showing a complete response to God's call. This transforms their ordinary lives into a mission of sharing the faith.

Paul encourages the Corinthians to unity of thought and goals, rejecting divisions based on allegiance to human leaders. He reminds them that "Christ is not divided." The strength of the Gospel does not come from fancy speech but from the cross.

These readings call us to welcome the radiant light of Christ into our personal "Galilees"—those intricate spaces within our lives marked by uncertainty, conflict, or division. By reading Scripture, engaging in heartfelt repentance, and committing ourselves to a meaningful mission, we can illuminate these shadowed corners and foster unity and understanding.

Background

The readings converge on Christ's light piercing darkness, fostering hope, unity, and missionary discipleship through the Word of God.

Isaiah 8:24-9:3 is a passage explaining how Zebulun and Naphtali, once looked down upon under Assyrian rule, will receive God's help and honour. The people who lived in darkness will see a great light, bringing joy and freedom from burdens, reminiscent of God's past victories. This foreshadows the Messiah, who brings light to the Gentiles in Galilee and fulfills Jesus' mission. The "great light" symbolizes God's wisdom and presence, transforming sorrow into joy.

Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14 The psalmist expresses deep trust in God. He emphasizes the desire for God's presence, seeking to "live in the house of the Lord." This illustrates God as the guiding light in fear, highlighting the wish for closeness with Him and the strength to face challenges.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17 Paul urges believers to unite and avoid divisions, questioning the loyalty to different leaders by asking, "Has Christ been divided?" He stresses the importance of sharing the gospel plainly to maintain the cross's power. Paul emphasizes that the Church, as "one body" unified by one Spirit, should focus on faith and unity rather than individual leaders, with the cross at its center.

Matthew 4:12-23 After John's arrest, Jesus goes to Capernaum in "Galilee of the Gentiles," which fulfills the prophecy from Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun... Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." He tells people to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near," and calls fishermen, saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." They obey right away, leaving their nets, boat, and father behind. Jesus travels around Galilee, teaching, preaching the kingdom, and healing "every disease." Capernaum's location is significant as it connects to Isaiah's prophecy, showing Jesus as light for non-Jewish areas. The call to the fishermen highlights urgency—acting "immediately" and showing transformation from ordinary work to saving souls. This marks the beginning of Jesus' mission, encouraging people to change their ways amid the challenges of temptation.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

Dear children, Jesus calls you to follow Him. Go with your leaders to listen to God's Word and learn how to shine His light. Go in peace.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Today is called the Sunday of the Word of God. That means we celebrate God speaking to us through the Bible. Today, we will hear how Jesus calls people to follow Him and how His light shines in dark places.

Let us begin.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

FIRST READING

Isaiah 9.1-4

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

There will be no gloom ¹ for those who were in anguish. ² In the former time, ³ the Lord brought into contempt the land of Zebulun ⁴ and the land of Naphtali, ⁵ but in the latter time ⁶ he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, ⁷ Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shone. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian." ⁸

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

¹ The word contrasts gloom with divine light.

² Fear, instability, loss of identity, poverty and dislocation.

³ Period of Assyrian invasion, populations deported and destabilized.

⁴ Among the earliest areas invaded by Assyria. Symbolic of places overlooked, wounded, communities on the margins.

⁵ Hebrew meaning to struggle or wrestle, however, also resilient at the same time.

⁶ Refers to the time that God acts following repentance, endurance and waiting bringing restoration, not only relief.

⁷ A river that flows from Mt. Hermon south to the Sea of Galilee, then to the Dead Sea.

⁸ Midian encompasses different episodes of Israel's early history, from Moses's formative years through the settlement period. Moses initially encountered Midian as a fugitive from Egypt, where he befriended Jethro, the Midianite priest, after defending his daughters from shepherds at a well. He subsequently married Jethro's daughter Zipporah and received his divine commission while in the Midian region.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 27.1, 4, 13-14

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid? **R.**

One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple. **R.**

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord; be strong,
and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! **R.**

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 1.10-13, 17-18

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's ⁹ people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," ¹⁰ or "I belong to Apollos," ¹¹ or "I belong to Cephas," ¹² or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been 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 proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

For the message about the cross ¹³ is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

⁹ A member of the church in Corinth.

¹⁰ Paul the Apostle, also called the Apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus, and Saint Paul.

¹¹ An evangelist in the early church.

¹² St. Peter, a fisherman who became an apostle and leader of the early church.

¹³ The cross distinguishes Christianity fundamentally within religious history and reveals God's true nature. Taking up the cross demands total reorientation of the self toward Christ's way

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, ¹⁴ he withdrew to Galilee. ¹⁵ He left Nazareth ¹⁶ and made his home in Capernaum ¹⁷ by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁸ so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles ¹⁹— the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

From that time, Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." Immediately, they left their nets and followed him.

As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately, they left the boat, their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues ²⁰ and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

¹⁴ John had publicly challenged Herod the tetrarch's adultery and was jailed for it. Stuart K. Weber, Matthew, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 42.

¹⁵ Galilee was the region of Jesus' early ministry, contrasting significantly with the locations of his later ministry. *ibid.*, 43.

¹⁶ A town in Galilee, home of Jesus.

¹⁷ A village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus based much of his ministry.

¹⁸ People referred to by Isaiah as the people dwelling in darkness.

¹⁹ Anyone who is not Jewish.

²⁰ Meeting place and prayer hall for the Jews.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

In Israel, there were towns called Zebulun and Naphtali that were gloomy and dark, like a night without any stars. The people were working hard and had heavy burdens. God saw them and spoke up, saying, "I am doing something. I will shine a light on you!" The people who had been in darkness ²¹ could see this light ²² and began to have hope again. They couldn't help but dance with joy, as if they had just won the biggest game ever!

God wanted to make their families happier, breaking the heavy chains that held them back, just like He did with the mean Midianites ²³ a long time ago. Why did He do all this? Because God had a fantastic plan all along—He wanted Jesus to come and brighten up the world, inviting everyone, even those far away, to join in the fun!

²¹ Darkness is often perceived as being negative and often related to concepts of chaos, evil, mischief, and general negativity.

²² Light of Christ.

²³ The descendants of Midian, son of Abraham.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Sing this with claps: **R.**

"The Lord is my light and my hero—who should I be afraid of?"

Bad guys might roar like lions, but God keeps me safe. **R.**

I want one thing: to hang out in God's house forever,
seeing His beautiful face! **R.**

Even if it's hard, I know I'll see God's goodness right here on earth.

"Wait for God—be brave and strong!" **R.**

It's like God turning on the biggest flashlight when monsters hide under your bed.

SECOND READING

In our second reading, Paul writes to his church friends: "Stop fighting when you are on the same team!

Do not say, 'I'm on Paul's team,' or 'Apollos' team,' or 'Peter's team.' Jesus isn't on any team—He's one big King on everyone's King!

I didn't baptize you for me; Jesus died for you!" God's power isn't fancy words—it's Jesus' cross that wins everything.

Be like one happy family, not divided like a broken puzzle.

GOSPEL

Jesus hears bad news—John is in jail—so He moves to another place called Capernaum, right where Isaiah said the light would shine for everybody, even Gentiles (people from other neighbourhoods). He shouts, "Turn around and be happy—the party is starting!"

Then, by the sea, He sees fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John fixing nets. "Come with me—I'll teach you to catch people!" They drop everything—nets, boat—and follow right away! Jesus walks everywhere, teaching God's good news, telling stories about the kingdom of God, and healing people.

Jesus is the light that Isaiah promised, calling all of us, like you here today, to His special team!

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

This Sunday's readings show that God sends Jesus as a bright light to help chase away sadness and be our friend. Let's think about this together—like having a fun chat with Jesus while enjoying cookies! Imagine a neighbourhood that is dark and sad, like in a storm with no electricity. But God brings a great light! Everyone feels joy again, like scoring a winning goal. Families grow happier, and God restores the light. Jesus is that light! He came to help during your dark days, too.

Have you ever been scared in the dark?

Does Jesus' light make you smile?

God protects us from bullies and bad dreams. The Psalmist desires to live with God forever and see His smile. "Wait for the Lord—be brave!" It's like God holding your hand in a tunnel. "The Lord is my light and salvation—whom shall I fear?"

Tell your parents after Mass how Jesus is your light!

St. Paul reminds us: "Stop dividing ourselves into different teams like 'I'm with Paul!' or 'I'm with Peter!' Jesus is one family leader who died for us, but not just for show. He is our only God. Let's be united like puppies in a basket—no pushing!

What's better: playing alone or with all your friends together?

Jesus goes to a busy town named Capernaum in the dark. He sees fishermen and says, "Follow Me—let's catch people for God!" They drop nets and run after Him right now! Jesus teaches, tells stories, and heals people everywhere. You're His friend—leave your "nets" (toys, worries) and join the team, Jesus, every day. Jesus' light makes us brave, united, and ready for adventure. At home, shine your light by being kind and sharing.

After Mass, tell Mom or Dad one thing that you will do to shine Jesus' light.

High-five— you're glowing!

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

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The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Let us pray to God, our loving Father, who hears our prayers. After each intercession, we all say, 'Lord, hear our prayer.'

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church, that we always listen to God's Word. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families, that they love and forgive one another. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For children who are sad or afraid, that Jesus' light helps them. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For us, that we follow Jesus every day. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause]. We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

Loving God, thank you for listening to our prayers, which we make with trusting hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Matthew 4:12-23



1. Where did Jesus go to live after John was put in prison?

- ☐ A. Jerusalem
- ☐ B. Bethlehem
- ☐ C. Capernaum by the sea



5. What did Jesus promise to make Simon and Andrew?

- ☐ A. Fishers of men
- ☐ B. Carpenters
- ☐ C. Shepherds



2. Which prophet said the people in darkness would see a great light?

- ☐ A. Moses
- ☐ B. Isaiah
- ☐ C. David



6. What did Simon and Andrew do when Jesus called them?

- ☐ A. They asked their father.
- ☐ B. They finished fishing first.
- ☐ C. They immediately left their nets and followed Him.



3. What message did Jesus begin to preach?

- ☐ A. Go fishing.
- ☐ B. Build a temple.
- ☐ C. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.



7. Who were the sons of Zebedee that Jesus called next?

- ☐ A. Simon and Andrew
- ☐ B. Matthew and Mark
- ☐ C. James and John



4. Who were the first two brothers Jesus saw by the Sea of Galilee?

- ☐ A. James and John
- ☐ B. Simon Peter and Andrew
- ☐ C. Philip and Thomas



8. What three things did Jesus do throughout Galilee?

- ☐ A. Fishing, sailing, and swimming.
- ☐ B. Teaching, preaching, and healing.
- ☐ C. Building, farming, and trading.

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