

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 25, 2026

Have seen a great light.

There are no divisions.

Come, follow me now.

-rvb.

In the second reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul grapples with dissension in the community. He reminds the community that all members are called to be Christ's ministers and disciples. However, a divided community can only bring low morale, division, gossip, misfortune, jealousy, politics, hidden agendas, contentions, and not being a model of a Christian community as the body of Christ. (This highlighted sentence will be repeated in the reflection as well).

Promoting a healthy community, family, or workplace, avoiding dissension and division. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

-Abraham Lincoln

Guidelines for living life with others:

1. **Really push yourself to try harder to better understand others rather than getting others to understand you.**
2. **Be more interested in extending and accommodating the relationship than in being right – Would you rather be right or have peace?**
3. **Avoid finally, "Black or White," "all or nothing thinking," i.e., "you always," "every time," or "never."**
4. **Make it a point to know and understand what the other's deepest wishes, wants, and desires are and try your best to provide these.**

5. **Do not criticize the person; only criticize a specific part of the other's behavior.**
6. **Do not tell the other person what he or she is thinking or feeling.**
7. **Avoid giving unsolicited, unasked for advice.**
8. **Send "I" rather than "you" messages, i.e. "I feel..." rather than "you make me feel..."**
9. **Realize the "art" of being wise in knowing what to overlook.**
10. **Learn to take the responsibility for controlling your emotions by monitoring your own thoughts, ideas, and self-sentences and self-talk that create your feelings.**
11. **Avoid grave-digging, i.e., throwing up the past to open old wounds.**
12. **Avoid finger-pointing, i.e., trying to prove who is the good guy or the bad girl.**
13. **Avoid scorekeeping, i.e., whose "turn" it is to apologize or give in; trying to prove who is more right or more wrong.**
14. **Avoid mind-reading, i.e., assuming you know what the other person is thinking or feeling without asking, acting on assumptions rather than asking.**
15. **Avoid hitting below-the-belt, i.e., going for the other's "sore spots" or "triggers."**

16. Accept the fact that love and total agreement/obligation/compatibility do not necessarily go together.

17. Avoid trying to convince the other of something that he or she does not want to be convinced of.

“It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being.” -Acts 17:18.

Blessings of Health, Happiness, and Holiness be upon you and your loved ones. - Roger J. Vanden Busch

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Reading 1

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,
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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

Isaiah's vision is a kingdom where Judah and Israel will be one. He foresees a king of peace who will be called Emmanuel – God with us. Chapter 8 and the next four chapters form close to one discourse. In this chapter, signs and wonders are pivotal around which the remainder of the chapter is developed. As a sign of hope, signs and wonders will appear during darkness and destruction, namely, the destruction of the confederate kingdoms of Syria and Israel by the Assyrians. The Assyrians invaded Israel and took captives from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. The first part of chapter 9 of Isaiah continues the pessimistic and sad refrain of chapter 8. However, those who walk in darkness will see a great light. A child is the only hope of Israel as he will be for the universe. When he ascends the throne of David, all promises and prophecies related to

Israel will be realized. Doom and gloom give way to joy and light – God is with us.

Our only infallible source of light, guidance, and comfort is God. Some are driven to darkness simply because they are rejecting the illuminating Word and Presence of God. God is hidden in the universe. It is our task to unearth the divine light by our words and actions. Those who live in the Arctic experience what is called the long arctic night which lasts for six months. During this period, the darkness of night prevails 24 hours daily. As this long period nears its end people begin to look forward anxiously to daylight. When the sun finally rises for the first time in six months and lights up their world, it is impossible to describe the excitement and joy that rises within their hearts. It is in this spirit that we listen for an Eskimo Chant- “Cold, cold. Frost, frost. Fling me not aside. You have bent me enough. Away! Away!”

It is with this kind of deep longing that people before Christ via the vision of Isaiah and other prophets that people looked forward to the coming of the Messiah who was to be the light of their world. “Lord God, Light unfailing, Creator of all lights and Sun of this universe, bless now the

lighting of this evening lamp, a symbol of your purity and radiance and a token of your presence and your power. Amen.” – Liturgy of Jyotiniketan Community.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 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 Corinthians 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 you. **there are rivalries among**
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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In the second reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul grapples with dissension in the community. He reminds the community that all members are called to be Christ’s ministers and disciples. As I wrote in the introduction, I repeat again, **However, a divided community can only bring low morale, division, gossip, misfortune, jealousy, politics, hidden agendas, contentions, and not being a model of a Christian community as the body of Christ.** We are called to be ministers and disciples of Jesus. All share in the mission of Jesus, namely, to reach out to others in need and to be a light for those who live in darkness. It is a house divided against itself that cannot stand or see how they love one another. Dr. King said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Paul attempts to mend the broken pieces of a dysfunctional community who are pulled apart by those who blindly follow their local heroes such as Cephas or Apollos. For Paul, many hands working together make a good soup. In addition to Paul's constructively critiquing the community, notice Paul's description of the nature of his ministry, not to baptize, but to preach, but not in and through human wisdom of the Greeks, but to preach the paradox of the cross. However, being a student of Greek philosophy, I have often found that the insights of philosophy and psychology can and do complement theology and scripture to enhance and deepen our spiritual journey, and deepen our sense of community and societal interactions in positive and healthy dimensions – for example-

Each of us can be the architect of our own existence and behavior; with the guidance of the eight pillars of Greek Wisdom, we can design a temple and life we can be proud of. Discuss each one and its implications for you in your personal and professional life.

- 1. Individualism affirms the unique potential of our personality – “Take pride in who you are as a unique individual.”**
- 2. The love of freedom inspires us to actualize that potential – “Only if we are free can we find fulfillment.”**
- 3. Restless curiosity leads us to explore all its dimensions – “Seek to know what reality really is, and not merely what it seems to be.”**
- 4. Rationalism gives us the means to solve problems and understand ourselves – “Search for the truth by using the power of your mind.”**

5. Self-knowledge informs us about our strengths and weaknesses – “Identify and understand your weaknesses and strengths.”
6. The practice of moderation helps us balance our behavior – “Beware of going to extremes, because in them lies danger.”
7. The pursuit of excellence motivates us to achieve – “Try to be more today than you were yesterday, more tomorrow than you were today.”
8. Humanism celebrates our efforts – “Be proud of your human abilities and believe in your capacity to achieve great accomplishments.”

-8 Pillars of Wisdom (The Eight Pillars of Greek Wisdom, Stephen Bertman, 2007).

Alleluia

Matthew 4:23

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom
and cured every disease among the people.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 4:12-23 or 4:12-17

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 anglers.

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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

I am fascinated by Jesus' invitation to discipleship, and he did not have a gathering of 3 million youth, male and female attending a World Youth Day in Brazil. Pope Francis challenged and invited them “to go out and to bring Jesus into every area of life.” Jesus' invitation appears suddenly and without warning. There does not seem to be any preparation on the part of the person who hears his call. Mary was called earlier, and now he calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John: “Come and follow me!” Their response is stark and simple because they drop their nets and follow him.

Is such a response ever that radical and complete for their families to support, or is it a process of growing to the moment of being struck by grace? I need to process this with my wife and my family. Nevertheless, the call of Jesus or being drawn in by him is unconditional. The Quaker spiritual writer, Thomas P. Kelly in Quaker Spirituality writes: “Prune and trim we must, but not with ruthless haste and ready pruning knife, until we have reflected upon the tree we trim, the environment it lives in, and the sap of life which feeds it.”

Remember the call of the rich young man who walks away from Jesus’ invitation. Perhaps someday, or maybe not, he will understand the implications and demands of Jesus’ words. He needed more time to grow, reflect, ponder, and live his life. Sometimes it is a question of discernment coupled with the courage to be, and the questioning and hopefully deepening of one’s faithful life. I wonder what eventually happens to the young man as he grows older. Does he have second thoughts? Does he seek Jesus later? Or is he lost forever?

John Henry Newmann captures the essence of today’s Gospel as he writes: “God has created me to do him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between

persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do his work. I am an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him; He does nothing in vain, He knows what He is about!"

We are fishers of men and women. When will we drop our nets to follow Him? Or let us take our nets along, for there is nothing better for the life of a social gathering than the traditional Friday night fish fry, especially during Lent.

Final Prayer: Eternal God, you call us to ministry, service, submission, and surrender as your disciples of Jesus. May your Holy Spirit affirm our response – “Yes, I will follow!”

Roger J. Vanden Busch – Blessing of Health, Happiness, and Holiness upon you and your loved ones.