

Homily: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: Is 8: 23 – 9:3; Ps. 27; 1 Corth 1: 10-13, 17; Mt 12-23

***“The Light of the Lord accompanying our entire earthly life – if we are open to it”***

One thing we all should know, as we go through life here on earth and try to hopefully live our Catholic faith on a deeper level and with more maturity, is we all have to face **challenges**, hopefully with the Lord and not apart from Him. Earthly life is a test on so many levels – we can do much of our Purgatory here the saints tell us. We all deal with our own weakness, brokenness, sinfulness and also with that of the people around us.

Winter time in the PA mountains with little sun or warmth can knock us down. How do we take this often gloomy time of the year and allow the Lord to fill it with His light?

1. **The light of God is here - if we want to tap into it**, the prophet Isaiah reminds us in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading, No matter what the challenges are in our earthly life if we bring them to the Lord in prayer, He will help us. He gives us strength, new resolve when our spirits are down, and a new perspective on life and people. We just have to persevere: to humbly ask Him to help us to rise above our always fickle feelings which can paralyze us emotionally and mentally; and to continue to come to Him in prayer begging for His help and grace to grow spiritually and to see earthly life with the mind of Christ more and more rather than our own limited human perspective. Let’s ask for a deeper share in God’s joy and peace for the good of our own soul and for the souls of the people around us. And remember too that God works through good human agents, e.g., in the medical field, and so sometimes if the sadness is ongoing, we may need some medicine to help balance us out on the human level in regard to depression. And there is no shame in that which can help us function better at least on the human level. But we also need the spiritual means of prayer, regular reception of Confession and asking the Lord and our Lady to help us bear our Cross in love to help other souls.
2. **Don’t get too caught up in the human element** – *remember all things work together for the good of those who love God* (see **Romans** chapter 8). It’s been a challenging time in recent years with the Covid pandemic and corruption in society, but as we all should know and take to heart, our Catholic faith is not

based on this passing world, but is based on the truth and love God revealed in the life of Jesus and now is protected from error by the Holy Spirit. We should always look to the canonized saints of the Church for inspiration - (*a tip: look each day at your Church calendar and read about that saint online*) – instead of allowing the bad example of some Catholics throughout history to drag us down into spiritual depression and even unbelief and cynicism. As St. Paul tells us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading our Catholic faith is not based on the human element of this person or that person, but rather upon the rock who is Christ. We need to remind ourselves and other people of that regularly. And that it is through the mystery of suffering, of various sorts (the Cross) united with Christ that we grow in His likeness (holiness) and help bring other souls to Him in the reality and grace of the Catholic spiritual life.

3. **We all have been called out of the spiritual darkness of sin and the devil into the light of God's love and truth which leads to salvation.** As Jesus calls the first Apostles today to come follow Him themselves and then become Fishers of men, He calls each one of us in our own unique vocation in life to follow Him. It starts with our **Baptism** when we become an adopted son or daughter of Our Heavenly Father in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus then calls us to a deeper union with Himself through the forgiveness of our sins in the Sacrament of **Confession** and to deep inner union with Him in the **Holy Eucharist**. Later on He gives us additional spiritual strength in the Sacrament of **Confirmation** to be witness to His Gospel in the world; and then He calls most of us to either the Sacrament of **Matrimony** or a few of us Catholic guys to the Sacrament of **Holy Orders**; and then when we become frail and in need of more strength to embrace the heavy Cross of sickness of various sorts, He give us the Sacrament of the **Anointing of the Sick**. The Lord accompanies us each stage of the journey of earthly life, and asks us to let Him lead us on the narrow path that leads to Heaven. Let's pray as we go through the gloomy PA winter months that we will be filled with the light of our Catholic faith, of Christ's peace and joy and point others to Him, so we can walk through the earthly darkness with the light of Christ leading us to the Ultimate Light only found in Heaven. God bless you.