

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year A

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time - A

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.

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 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.

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 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.

Exegesis

Isaiah 8:23-9:3

The Prophet Isaiah begins his book as follows: “The vision which Isaiah, son of Amos, had concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” (Is 1: 1) Through extra biblical sources experts can ascertain the dates that the kings reigned, Jotham (742-735), Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-678). Isaiah reveals the year that he experienced his call to ministry as the year that King Uzziah died, which was 742 B.C. Experts also suggest that Isaiah remained in his role as a prophet until 701 when Jerusalem was under the siege of the Assyrians.

In 752 B.C. Pekah became king of Israel by assassinating his predecessor Pekahiah. His reign was marred by a great period of political unrest. Pekah reigned as king of Israel until the Northern Tribes were overrun by the Assyrians in 732 B.C. *2 Kings* describes this political collapse. “During the reign of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, came and took Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, all the territory of Naphtali, Gilead, and Galilee, deporting the inhabitants to Assyria.” (2 Kgs 15: 29). The northern part of Galilee became the Assyrian province that was named Megiddo.

Our pericope is taken from a section of *Isaiah* that is titled *The Prince of Peace* in the NAB and *For to Us a Child is Born* in the ESV. The Prophet Isaiah describes the fall of the Northern Tribes in 732 B.C. and the promise of a Messiah to come. The Prophet foresees a glorious ruler coming forth from the stump of Jesse, the line of David.

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. Nazareth was in the land of Zebulun. Naphtali was north and east of Zebulun and bordered the Jordan River to the east. The *seaward road* was a trade route that passed through Galilee from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea. The degrading of this land that Isaiah is referring to, no doubt, came with the fall of these tribal lands to the Assyrians in 732 B.C. The Hebrew word for *seen* in this passage is *raah*. *Raah* can also be translated as *understand*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *great* is *gadol*. *Gadol* can also be translated as *mighty* or *important*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *shown* is *nagah*. *Nagah* can be translated as *shine*, *gleam*, *shed light*, and *brilliance*. It is interesting that the LXX translates this word with the Greek word *aneteilen*, which is translated as *has risen*. Presumably this translation was inspired in anticipation of Jesus being the light that is rising in the world, i.e., the Light of the World.

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. The metaphor of moving from darkness and gloom to light and understanding, now continues with a common image of joy experienced with the harvest and with the dividing of spoils in victory. The psalmist speaks of this joy. “Many say, ‘May we see better times! Lord, show us the light of Your face. But You have given my heart more joy than they have when grain and wine abound.’” (Ps 4: 7-8). “I rejoice in Your promise, as one who has found rich spoil.” (Ps 119: 162).

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. “The Israelites offended the Lord, who therefore delivered them into the power of Midian for seven years.” (Judg 6: 1). When the time was right God intervened and delivered Israel from the oppression of the Midianites through the leadership of Gideon. “‘I shall be with you,’ the Lord said to him, ‘and you will cut down Midian to the last man.’” (Judg 6: 16). Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon to reassure him through the interpretation of a dream. “‘This can only be the sword of the Israelite Gideon, son of Joash,’ the other replied, ‘God has delivered Midian and all his camp into his power.’” (Judg 7: 14). God did deliver the people from the oppression of the Midianites. This is one of many events in salvation history celebrating the saving hand of God. It is noteworthy, especially relative to our Gospel passage this weekend, that these events are taking place in Galilee, e.g., “The Israelites were called to arms from Naphtali, from Asher, and from Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.” (Judg 7: 23). Midian and his army were driven from Galilee south and across the Jordan.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14.

Psalm 27 consists of fourteen verses and is titled *Trust in God* in the NAB and *The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation* in the ESV.

It begins: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear.* The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse and throughout this psalm as *Lord* is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that we translate as *light* is *or*. In the Creation Story, the first thing that God spoke into being was *or*, light. The image of light permeates Sacred Scripture from beginning to end. The *Book of Revelation* ends with the image that there will be no more need of sun or moon, as God will be our light. Describing the New Heaven and the New Earth, “The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.” (Rev 21: 23). St. John proclaims: “God is light.” (1Jn 1: 5). Jesus Himself states clearly, “I AM the light of the world.” The Hebrew word translated as *salvation* is *yesa*. The word *Yeshua* (Joshua or Jesus) is derived from *ye-sa*. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse and the following verses as *fear* is *yirah*. *Yirah* can mean *craven fear*, however vis-à-vis God it most often describes a sense of *awe, reverence, and honor*.

The LORD is my life’s refuge; of whom should I be afraid? The Hebrew word that is translated as *refuge* in this verse is *maoz*. *Maoz* is translated as *stronghold* in the ESV. It can also mean *mountain stronghold, place of refuge, or fortress*. In preparing for his battle with Midian, Gideon was instructed by the Lord to prepare a sacrifice on the mountain. “You shall build, instead, the proper kind of altar to the Lord your God, on the top of this stronghold (*maoz*). David’s song of thanksgiving in *2 Samuel* speaks of this *refuge* as a personal gift. “For who is God except the Lord? Who is a rock save our God? The God who girded me with strength (*maoz*) and kept my way unerring.” (2 Sam 22: 32-33).

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. “Lord, I love the house where you dwell, the tenting place of Your glory.” (Ps 26: 8).

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living. In a similar passage King Hezekiah, after he had been extremely ill and recovered begins a beautiful prayer of gratitude by acknowledging his mortality: “I said, ‘I shall see the Lord no more in the land of the living.’” (Is 38: 11). Later rejoicing in his recovery Hezekiah proclaims: “The living, the living give you thanks, as I do today. Fathers declare to your sons, O God, your faithfulness. The Lord is our Savior; we shall sing to stringed instruments in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.” (Is 38: 19-20). Like Hezekiah rejoicing in the healing of his physical illness the psalmist is rejoicing in God’s delivery from his enemies, all evil doers.

Wait for the LORD with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD. The Hebrew word that is translated as *wait* in this verse is *quewah*. *Quewah* can also be translated as *hope, long for, or look for*. The connotation is that it is not about passive waiting. *Proverbs* says, “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil!’ wait (*quewah*) for the Lord and He will deliver you.” (Prov 20: 22). Psalm 31 echoes this verse, “Be strong, and let your heart take courage all you who wait for the Lord.” (Ps 31: 24).

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Corinth was a very wealthy and diverse seaport city at the time of Paul, with access to both the Aegean and the Adriatic seas. The city was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. It became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. The province consisted of a very diverse population with a wide variety of religious practices. There is evidence of cults to the Roman emperors, temples dedicated to Greek deities and even Egyptian gods. In the midst of this diversity there was a Jewish presence. The Jewish presence may have dated as far back as the Diaspora. By the first century A.D. there was a thriving Jewish community with several active synagogues.

In this diverse metropolis Paul introduced the Gospel. Paul established a community in Corinth in the year 51. “After this he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth.” (Acts 18: 1). “When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began to occupy himself totally with preaching the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus.” (Acts 1: 5). “One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, ‘Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in the city.’ He settled there for a year and a half and taught the word of God among them.” (Acts 18: 9-11).

“But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews rose up against Paul and brought him to the tribunal.” (Acts 18: 12). We know from extra-biblical sources that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in the years 51 and 52. This information has helped scholars date the writings and travels of Paul. Paul penned this letter approximately five years later while in Ephesus. “I shall stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.” (1 Cor 16: 8). This stay in Ephesus occurred during his third missionary journey which spanned the years 53-58.

1 Corinthians begins with an introduction (vs. 1-3), follows with words of gratitude, a prayer of thanksgiving (vs. 4-9), and then Paul begins to address concerns that were brought to his attention relative to this community that he founded five years prior. This is where our pericope begins. The NAB titles this broader section *Disorders in the Christian Community*. The subsection in which our selected passage falls is titled in the NAB *Divisions in the Church*.

Concerning the nascent Church at Corinth Paul received reports of factions forming divided along the lines of various leaders, in particular Chloe, Apollos, and Cephas. This is the only place that Chloe is mentioned in Scripture, so we know little about her. Apollos was from Alexandria. He preached the Gospel and ministered in Corinth following Paul’s initial visit there. He is introduced in *Acts* as follows: “A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent speaker, arrived in Ephesus. He was an authority on the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord and, with ardent spirit, spoke and taught accurately about Jesus.” (Acts 18: 24-25). Cephas is the Aramaic translation for Peter. Either Peter or some of his followers apparently visited Corinth. There is no evidence of Peter’s association with Corinth except for this letter. Paul mentions Cephas several times in *1 Corinthians* (See 3:22; 9:5; 15:5), so evidently the community was familiar with him to the extent that he had a following in the community.

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.

The Greek word that is translated as *send* in this verse is *apostello*. *Apostello* means to *send out* but also carries a connotation of *sending a message* or *sending a word*. The Greek word that is translated as *preach* in this verse is *euangelizo* which means to *proclaim* or *announce the Good News*. Paul seeks to focus on one thing, the message that he was sent to preach, the Cross of Christ. The focus should be not on the messenger, but on the message, Christ and Christ Crucified. One Greek word, *kenoo*, is translated here as the phrase *emptied of its meaning*. *Kenoo* is translated in the ESV as *emptied of its power*. *Kenoo* can also be translated as *render void*, *empty out* or *drain*.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 4:12-23

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *arrested* is *paradidomi*. *Paradidomi* means to *hand over, betray, or deliver*. *Paradidomi* recurs several times in the Passion Narrative. “Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over (*paradidomi*) to you?’” (Mt 26: 15). “And from that moment on he sought an opportunity to betray (*paradidomi*) Him.” (Mt 26: 16). “And while they were eating, He said, ‘Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray (*paradidomi*) Me.’” (Mt 26: 21). The betrayal that John the Baptist experienced foreshadows the Passion of Jesus.

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: Capernaum is a city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It gets its name from the Hebrew *village of Nahum*. Capernaum was located in the area of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. *Joshua* recounts the distribution of land to the tribes. (See Josh 19: 32-34).

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. For an exegesis of this quotation from the Prophet Isaiah see the discussion above. In the eighth century B.C. the Prophet Isaiah was writing about this moment in time. Isaiah reveals light as the coming of the Messiah in the verses that follow our pericope. “For a child is born to us, a Son is given us; upon His shoulder dominion rests. They name Him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David’s throne, and over his kingdom, which He confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever.” (Is 9: 5-6). The title that is translated as *God-Hero* in this verse is translated as *Mighty God* in the ESV. In the original Hebrew it reads *Gibbor El*. *Gibbor El* is often used when speaking of Yahweh. (See Is 10:21; Deut 10:17; Neh 9:32, Jer 32:18 and Ps 45:3). This would suggest that Isaiah is prophesying about the Messiah. As he often does, Matthew points to Jesus fulfilling the prophecies of the OT.

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The proclamation by Jesus echoes the exact words of John the Baptist (see Matt 3:2). The Greek word that is translated as *repent* is the familiar word *metanoia*, which means to *change direction, or a change of mind or heart*. It is comprised of two Greek words *meta* and *noia*. *Noia* is the word for mind or intellect. *Meta* means to *change*. *Meta* was the name given for a turnaround marker in a race. *Meta* has also evolved to mean *beyond*, e.g., *metaphysical* describes that which is beyond the physical. *Metanoia* can describe a place beyond the mind, i.e., going to a deeper level within the human heart. God’s love and mercy is beyond intellectual comprehension and must be experienced at a deeper level. Both Matthew and Mark quote Jesus proclaiming *metanoia* as He began His public ministry. At its deepest level *metanoia* means to reconnect with the God, the source of love and mercy. (see the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the whale as he repents).

The expression *Kingdom of Heaven* is common in Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew quotes Jesus as informing His disciples to make this proclamation as well. “And proclaim as you go, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” (Mt 10: 7). The Prophet Daniel spoke of this kingdom. “In the lifetime of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to other people; rather, it will break in pieces all these kingdoms and put an end to them, and it shall stand forever.” (Dan 2: 44).

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 4:12-23

The Greek word that is translated as *at hand* is *engizo*. *Engizo* can also be translated as *draw near, come near, or approach*.

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." When prophesying of the return of the Exiles, the Prophet Jeremiah spoke of the promise of the Lord, "I will bring them back to the land which I gave their fathers. Look, I will send many fishermen, says the Lord, to catch them." (Jer 16: 15-16). This is just one of many prophecies fulfilled in Jesus. As is typical, Jesus met them where they were, engaged in their way of living. It was customary for boys coming of age to seek out a teacher/master and to become a disciple of that man. It was also customary for a boy to follow in the footsteps of his father, to learn his trade. It was not common for a teacher to seek disciples.

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. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *at once* is *eutheos*. *Eutheos* is translated in the ESV as *immediately*. The Greek word that is translated here as *left* is *aphiemi*. *Aphiemi* can be translated as *leave, forgive, let loose, or abandon*. The Greek word that is translated as *called* in this verse is *kaleo*. *Kaleo* means to *call, summon, or name*. It carries a notion of being very personal, e.g., being called by name. The Greek word that is translated as *followed* is *akoloutheo*, which can also mean to *go after or obey*.

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. There is no mention of *synagogues* in the OT. They were places of worship and teaching in local communities. The focus was on Hebrew Scripture. Some suggest that they became a reality during the diaspora or perhaps during the restoration period. The apostles found synagogues in many of the cities and villages that they visited on their missionary journeys. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *teaching* is *didasko*. The Greek word that is translated as *proclaiming* is *kerysso*, which can also be translated as *preach, announce, or herald*. The Greek word that is translated as *healing* is *therapeuo*, which can also be translated as *curing, attending, or serving*.

Reflection

Our readings this weekend point to light entering a darkened world. Every time we turn on the evening news, we see a lot of darkness. With global coverage we see darkness that once went unseen. There is a force in our world that opposes light and love, and goodness and life. There is a force that opposes God. It is the force of evil, Satan, the author of darkness and death. Into that world darkened by sin and death a light has shown.

King Herod was the visible sign of that darkness when the Light of the World was born. He sought to snuff out the light, and to that end, he had all of the male babies in the vicinity put to death. Enlightened by God in a dream, Joseph and Mary were able to escape into Egypt with the child. Now Herod's son, Herod Antipas, has arrested John the Baptist, in a similar attempt to squelch the voice of light and life. John is thrown into the darkness of a prison dungeon. Jesus now visibly re-enters the darkness of our world and hits evil head on. He is no longer hidden but moving about the whole of Galilee spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of light and life, of goodness and peace.

Jesus calls His first disciples and us to follow Him through the darkness of our world into the light of faith. The Sea of Galilee is a very dark and murky lake. Fishing is symbolic of pulling fish out of the dark and murky into the light of day. Jesus is calling his new disciples to be fishers of men, drawing people out of darkness into the light of life. The disciples are drawn to Jesus, the Light of the World. They immediately drop their nets and follow Jesus. Even though we live in the darkness of our fallen human nature, we are naturally ordered to the light. The deepest longing of our hearts is for love and life, and goodness, and truth. Our deepest longing is for God, the source of all light.

In our second reading this weekend, St. Paul reminds us that our light shines the brightest when we are united with Jesus in mind and heart. When we are working together in singularity of purpose, striving to fulfill the mission of Jesus, then we are the most visible sign of His Body here on earth. Together we stand strong against the dark forces that oppose God's plans. This is God's plan unveiled today in our Gospel. We are being chosen by name, called and sent, to bring light into the dark corners of our world. We are being called to draw others out of the darkness into His wonderful light!

We ask God to fill us with the light of His Holy Spirit as we pray, Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

I am what is referred to as a second career vocation. I entered the seminary at the age of 42 and was ordained at 47. Before entering the seminary, I worked as a Certified Public Accountant for 19 years. Like the apostles in today's Gospel I felt the call from Jesus in a very personal way. Unlike the apostles in today's Gospel, I was not real quick to drop my "nets." From the time that I knew that God was calling me to be a priest, it took me 7 years to finally make the move to the seminary. Those were some of the most difficult years of my life as I painfully went through the process of cutting things out of my life and letting go. I had numerous business ventures that I had to sell and let go of. I was active in many community organizations that I had to move on from. The final and most difficult task of all involved the selling of my home that I had completely remodeled and refurbished and had settled into comfortably.

I was privileged to attend the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary from August of 1994 through graduation in May of 1999. The Seminary is in Mundelein, Il., which is about 45 miles north of Chicago. As I began my seminary training as a 42-year-old second vocation student, I found myself surrounded by recent college graduates and second career men. My class of 35 students was comprised of almost 60% second career vocations. My class consisted of lawyers, accountants, teachers, a medical doctor, a dentist, an entomologist, and a rocket scientist just to mention a few.

We became very close friends over those years in the seminary. We all openly and often shared the experience of our calling to the priesthood. Everyone had a different story with one common thread, it was a personal calling from Jesus, Himself! Some felt the calling from childhood, but most, especially the second career men, were settling into their professions and their careers when they received the call. Like the apostles along the Sea of Galilee, Jesus met them where they were, and he called them to follow Him.

My calling was a little different from my classmates. Mine was more of a revelation than a calling. For me it happened after the Penance Service at a Cursillo Experience. After confession I knelt before the tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at the retreat house. In a moment of grace my life passed before me. My faith moved from belief to knowledge. I was transported to my childhood mountain-top experience of God, that clear and cold January night on my grandparent's farm. As I relived that moment once again, I knew that God was real, that the Church established on the Rock of St. Peter was real, and that God had a plan for me in His Church. In my heart I heard Jesus speaking to me, it was in my grandfather's voice as clear as if he were sitting next to me. The voice said, "You are a priest."

I remember the day 30 years ago when I finally moved into my room at Mundelein Seminary. It was a typical dorm style room about 14' square. It came furnished with a twin bed, a desk and chair, a large crucifix on the wall and one 60-watt lightbulb in the center of the ceiling. I remember that first night as if it were yesterday. I sat at my desk and stared up at the crucifix for the longest time. I have never felt so free and so at peace as I did at that moment. For the first time in my life, I knew that my will and God's will for me were one. For that gift I will always be grateful!

