

## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

Psalms 27:1, 4, 13–14

1 Corinthians 1:10–14, 17

Matthew 4:12–23 [or (short form) 4:12–17]

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

## The Word in Liturgy



Scholars believe that the historical setting for today's first reading was a period during the eighth century during which the Northern Kingdom was being overrun by hostile forces. Many in the Kingdom of Judah to the south were fearful that they would be the next to fall. Isaiah offers instead a vision of hope, based on what he sees as the certain intervention of Yahweh on behalf of Jerusalem. Some feel that the occasion for this hopeful prophecy may have been the accession to the throne of a new monarch, one who would be God's instrument to defend and protect the land and its people. The optimism of the text is impressive, heightened by Isaiah's lush imagery of a bright dawn, blazing torches of victory, a harvest festival, and the revels of soldiers dividing spoils after a victory.

The Church reads this text of Isaiah as a preparation for our hearing Matthew describe the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Matthew quotes this passage of Isaiah directly, thus invoking its aura of triumphant expectation as an appropriate response to the messianic age ushered in by Jesus, whose vocation and destiny it is "to fulfill what had been said through Isaiah the prophet." Today's pericope from Matthew concludes the first of the five "books" of his gospel by offering a summary of the entire ministry of Jesus: He proclaims the arrival of God's reign, calls disciples to join him, preaches and works deeds of power throughout the land. In 9:35, Matthew repeats this same framework to summarize the ministry of Jesus who preaches (5:3–7:27, the Sermon on the Mount) and works wonders (8:1–9:34), and



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immediately thereafter (10:1–42) calls the Twelve by name and sends them out on a mission—to share in his own messianic ministry. Our catechetical focus today on the notion of vocation is rooted, as we see, in the very structure of Jesus’ ministry, which he deliberately chose to share with those whom he called as his disciples. And the ministry of Jesus, in turn, sinks deep roots in the prophetic soil of Israel, as Matthew repeatedly demonstrates by his frequent mention that what happened with Jesus was “to fulfill what had been said” of old, in the Jewish scriptures. Jesus’ vocation is rooted in God’s call to Isaiah and all the prophets like him. Our vocation, in turn, is rooted in that of Jesus.

## **Catholic Doctrine**

### ***Vocation***

The word “vocation” derives from the Latin *vocare*, which literally means “to call.” Catholics believe that all human beings are called by God to share divine life and ultimately eternal happiness and that this calling has come to us in a privileged way in Jesus Christ. Through divine unconditional love, humanity has not only been created but gifted with a redeemer and savior, Jesus, who opens the way for all to be transformed in the Holy Spirit as adopted children of God and therefore as inheritors of a graced life (CCC 1).

Being graced does not imply passivity, but just the opposite. The Church teaches that being immersed in and experiencing divine love through baptism not only celebrates God’s care and providence for us, but moves the believer to actions of love.

In any discussion of our calling from God it must be noted that historically the concept of vocation was usually exclusively applied to the clergy and religious life. But, in modern times, drawing from the scriptures themselves and from its reflection upon the nature of the Church itself, the Second Vatican Council expanded the theological concept of vocation to all believers, rightly understanding that the model for discipleship as seen in the gospels applies to all men and women who are baptized. Therefore, Catholics understand that in speaking of a vocation, all are called—not just ordained ministers and religious—to contribute as disciples and followers of Jesus, given their own particular gifts and abilities and the circumstances of their lives.