



# *Growing in Transition*

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## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

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### Opening Prayer

*Take a few moments of silence and perhaps play a song of your choice. Invite one person to pray or pray as a group.*

Jesus our Brother,  
you promised to be present wherever  
those who follow you would gather together.  
Be with us today, as we come together in your name.  
Guide our thoughts and conversation,  
so that we can continue to grow ever closer to you,  
and ever clearer about how to serve you.  
In your name we pray.  
Amen.

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### Faith in Action

*Take a few moments to give all an opportunity to share progress on last week's action.*

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### Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

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### Catch a Phrase

*Take a few moments to savor a word, a question, or a feeling that rises up in you. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.*

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### Reflection

Last week, John was our teacher in the gospel reading. This week we leave his class and become followers of Jesus himself. We're joining him early on—today's gospel records the very beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus' public life begins at a time of personal transition and loss. In the verses before our reading, Jesus was baptized and then left to dwell for more than a month in the wilderness. When he finally returns, he receives some bad news: John has been arrested. As we know, the Baptist would never leave prison alive.

When Jesus hears this news, he decides to leave Nazareth and take up residence in the lakeside town of Capernaum. As we will discover as we progress through this Year with Matthew, he makes a particular point of highlighting ways in which Jesus can be seen as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. He will present Jesus as coming and so has spent much of his book explaining how Jesus has come, in some sense, from Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, and the Jewish regions of Zebulun and Naphtali. (For a first century carpenter, Jesus has certainly seen a lot of the world!) This last move, however, provoked by the news of John's arrest, takes Jesus away from his homeland. It takes him away from his childhood. How Jesus reacts to this crisis can teach us a lot about how to respond to the transition and loss in our own lives. He doesn't withdraw into himself. Instead, he looks beyond himself and gives love to the people around him. He embraces a vocation. He begins his life's work.

Luckily, Jesus doesn't have to start from scratch. Of course, Jesus is unique, and his message will be, too. But for now his message is word for word the same as John's: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (see Matt. 3:2). John's removal has cleared the way for Jesus' own preaching, but the message of reconciliation with God remains the same. And Jesus isn't left to do it alone. We see at the end of our reading Jesus calling his first disciples. Jesus' earthly ministry, like John's, must one day end. When it does, Jesus' disciples in turn will be there to continue his work.

The apostles, too, needed to ensure a way for others to bring the good news of God's love to the world. They chose successors, bishops, as bearers of the message. This message, the authoritative teaching of the Church, has been handed down through the centuries, all the way down to our own. Now is our time to work for the reign of God.

We, like Jesus, and those who came after him, come to this point in a time of transition. Some of us left our hometowns behind to move to college. More of us left our families for the first time to pursue our educations. And all of us underwent a major life change when we started this phase of our journey. School is a choice, a decision we make for ourselves every day. Vocationally, we've grown up.

Now, in the midst of this transition, is the time for each of us to decide how we will help usher in the kingdom of God. Each of us as members of the Christian community takes up our torch in a unique way, whether it is in outreach to a stressed roommate or community service program, inviting someone to join our small Christian community, participating as a lector at Mass. And Jesus, true to his promise (Matt. 28:20), is always with us.

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### **Questions for Reflection**

- What are some examples of people, either famous or in my own life, who have thrived in the midst of transition or loss? How have I learned from them?
  - What are some ways in which my life is in transition right now? How am I dealing with these transitions?
  - Where do I see my own life and mission going? Why? How am I called to live my life as a Christian in light of this?
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### **Beckoned to Action**

*Choose an action for the coming week. If possible, have the action response flow from your own thoughts and sharing. The following are suggestions:*

- Think of someone from your own life who responded to a moment of crisis or transition in an extremely positive way. Write them a letter, or talk to them, and tell them what a powerful witness such a response can be. They may not realize they were following in the footsteps of Jesus. Point this reading out to them!
- Identify a spiritual figure whose service to God's people you would like to take over for a day. This can be wildly ambitious, if you like! Think about how her or his daily life or devotional

habits are different from your own. On a half sheet of paper, write down three concrete actions you can take to make your life more closely resemble this person's. Put this list next to your bathroom mirror or somewhere else you will see it every day. Be sure to follow your actions.

- Find a concrete way to reach out to those who are having difficulty with transitions—moving, job loss, loss of a loved one, beginning college, graduating. This could be volunteering at a job center, helping organize an orientation session, help provide welcome meals, or singing at funerals.

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### **Closing Prayer**

*Invite one person to pray or pray together.*

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### **Looking Ahead**

*Prepare for your next gathering by prayerfully reviewing the Scripture reading and Reflection for the next session as identified by your Small Community Leader.*