

A Reflection from Deacon Steve for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

From the Deacon's desk...

In our first reading today we hear from Isaiah as he speaks to the people of his time, while prophetically laying the groundwork for the ministry of Jesus Christ that would take place centuries later. He declares, "*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.*" These names – Zebulun and Naphtali – may seem strange to us, thus making us wonder what all of this means.

Zebulun and Naphtali were two of the sons of Jacob. Their descendants were two of the ten tribes that settled in the Northern territory of the Land of Judah. After the death of Solomon in 931 B.C., those tribes adopted the way of the pagans and turned away from God. They separated from the rest of Judah, and became the land of Israel. From 733 to 732 B.C. these northern tribes of Galilee were ravaged by the Assyrians, resulting in perhaps thousands of people being exiled to Assyria.

The faithful Hebrews looked down on the people of the Galilean region, including Zebulun and Naphtali, because they had turned their backs on God. So, in the centuries to come, the faithful people of Judah figured that little good would ever come out of the area around Galilee. (See John 1:46.) Ultimately Jesus would come out of that region, the area where Naphtali and Zebulun had intersected, to begin his ministry of salvation. Jesus was the one that Isaiah predicted would glorify the region. The Jewish people had considered Galilee to be in darkness, at least in the sense of faith. Jesus would bring heavenly light to the spiritual darkness of Galilee, the District of the Gentiles.

Two thousand years later Jesus is still the one who can bring light to our world that too often finds itself in the darkness of division and selfishness, while following the false gods of money, power, politics, unfaithfulness, carnal excess, and a denial of truth. Jesus is the light that leads us to the way, the truth and the life. Let's decide to follow his light that promises to carry us to eternal happiness with God in heaven.

Deacon Steve