

### III ORDINARY TIME— 22nd January 2017

**HE WENT AND LIVED IN CAPERNAUM,...- TO FILFILL WHAT WAS SAID THROUGH THE PROPHET ISIAIAH – Commentary Biblical by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Matthew 4,12-23**

***When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:***

***“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,  
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles—  
the people living in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of the shadow of death  
a light has dawned.”***

***From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”  
As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.***

***Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.***

***Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people***

After the episode of the temptations in the desert, temptations that were not used at the time, but that will continue throughout Jesus' existence, the evangelist in chapter 4, 12, presents the beginning of Jesus' activity. Let's read.

*“When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison,...”* the evangelist throws a sinister light on Jesus' activities. Here is what happens to urge a change: the powerful do not want to change, they want to conserve, but the stupidity of power is that, when they try to silence a voice, because it is inconvenient to them, the Lord then will send an even more powerful one. So John is silenced, here is the successor, Jesus.

*“.. he withdrew ..”,* this verb always indicates a withdrawal in relation to danger, *“..to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area ... ”* and here there is an inconsistency, *“.. of Zebulun and Naphtali..”* but Capernaum is in the land of Naphtali, why does the evangelist write that it is the land of Zebulun? Because, according to the literary style of the rabbis, Matthew, who was probably a scribe, wants to introduce a prophesy, from verses of the Prophet Isaiah that are dear to his heart, in fact he says *“..to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:”*

This prophesy is a promise of liberation from the situation of oppression, of domination by the Assyrians: *“ Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,”* that's why he had said it before, *“..the Way of the Sea, beyond the*

*Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles*— “ While Judea, the region that includes Jerusalem, the Holy city, takes the name of Judas, one of the chiefs of the tribe of Israel. This territory is so despised by the prophet that it has no name, it is called the land of the gentiles, in Hebrew district is “*ghelil*”, hence the term Galilee.

*Galilee of the Gentiles*—

*the people living in darkness*

*have seen a great light;*

*on those living in the land of the shadow of death*

*a light has dawned.*” The evangelist anticipates that which will be the work of the disciples, that Jesus will ask them to be the light of the world.

“*From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent,.. “ Jesus’ the first words are an invitation to a change, a change of mentality that then reflects on behaviour, “... for the kingdom of heaven..” Jesus’ message does not refer to the Kingdom in Heaven, but the Kingdom of Heaven . heaven meaning God, the kingdom of God, the alternative society that Jesus came to introduce, “..has come near.” Why does he not say that it is here already? Because this kingdom will become reality with the proclamation of the beatitudes, and Jesus’ first beatitude is “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” ( Matthew 5,1) It is not a promise for the future, but a possibility for the present. When there is a community, however small, that agrees to share what there is, what it does, the kingdom of heaven begins, God governs these people, these communities. And God does not govern issuing laws the people must observe, but communicating his spirit to them and his own capacity of love.*

“*As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, “ these two brothers are important, because being two brothers they will be the characteristic of Jesus’ community “Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew.” These two brothers have names of Greek origin, meaning a family more extended, more liberal mentally. Simone, the first, is known by his nickname, indicating persistence, stubbornness, Peter (from pietra – stone) that hard head. “They were casting a net into the lake,” and then the evangelist makes an unnecessary comment “.. for they were fishermen.” Why does the evangelist underline, that they were fishermen? Because in reality it refers to the prophet Ezekiel who, in chapter 47,10 there is a prophesy in which he says that in the time of the Messiah, there will be good fishing for fishermen.*

“*Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” This is what Jesus asks. Jesus does not ask them to become shepherds, he is the only shepherd, but fishers of men, what does this mean? Catching fish is known, it means taking the fish from their vital habitat out of the water that gives death. Fishing men means rather to save them, pull them out of the water that can give death. It is interesting that Jesus, in calling his followers, does not choose the monks, the pious, those belonging to the priesthood, the powerful, the theologians who were at that time, but chooses ordinary people, outside of the religion, because they have to communicate life, and those who live under the cloak of religion, do not have life and cannot communicate it..*

“*At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John.” The evangelist underlines the fact that they are brothers many times. These two brothers have a name rigorously Jewish, therefore it means a family of more strict observance of religion and the laws of Israel. “They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them.. “,so it’s a family already structured in a hierarchy, and this will be seen throughout the gospel. “..and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” They have left their father, because in Jesus’ community there are no fathers, the only father is the Father in heaven, but they have not, unfortunately left their mother, and the mother will be a source of trouble for these two brothers, because of her ambition, which will risk to bring the division, a schism in the community of Jesus.*

“*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, “ the evangelist, for Jesus’ work , uses two different verbs: in the synagogue Jesus teaches, to teach means to take the richness of the Israeli an tradition, from the Old Testament of the Bible to his teaching; but, to the*

others, outside Israel, the gentiles, he uses the word proclaiming, that indicates something new. And what is it that Jesus teaches and proclaims? The gospel. It is the first time that in this book appears the word gospel, that is the good news, and what is this good news? The good news of the kingdom is that Jesus heals every sickness and disease of the people. God's attention is for infirmity, for the people, the effect of the kingdom is to bring God's tenderness for every creature, especially the most needy and the most suffering.