

**GOSPEL MEDITATION -  
ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE**

**January 22, 2023  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday  
in Ordinary Time**

**Readings:**

Isaiah 8:23—9:3

Psalms 27:1,4, 13-14

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Matthew 4:12-23



When I was a young seminarian, I asked a wise old priest how to pray better. He said simply, “Don’t lie when you pray.” He helped me to see how much energy I waste in trying to appear acceptable to God when I pray. For me, prayer was showing off for God and hiding what was ugly.

It’s stunning that the Gospel of Matthew tells us of Jesus, **“He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali...”** This isn’t just the Lord’s relocation up north. It’s his moving into places of shame and defeat. This region was where the enemy invasion of Israel began centuries before. Jesus left the comfortable confines of Nazareth and sought out a place of darkness, not to bring shame, but to announce the dawning of his light.

When we pray, we usually prefer Jesus to stay put in our little Nazareths — where we feel comfortable, successful, and in control. But he moves. He re-locates into the Zebulons and Naphtalis of our shame, embarrassment, fear, and sense of being defeated. The question for us is: will we allow him to take up residence in *those* places in our prayer time? Will we talk to him honestly about our places of darkness? If we do, we’re no longer lying when we pray.

— *Father John Muir*

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