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3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - 23 January 2022

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23 January 2022

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

As we move further into Ordinary Time, so too, this Sunday, do we begin our journey with Luke's Gospel in Year C. As the Word of God in Luke's Gospel is broken open this year, will our response allow others to know that the promise of Jesus is fulfilled in their hearing?

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to bring good news to the poor.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to proclaim liberty to captives.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

*Almighty ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.*

It is no accident that this oration is prayed in the first month of the year. Its seventh century origins lay in sets of Mass prayers for the days after Christmas, and especially those around the incoming of the new year. The Christmas context heightened the sense of God's 'good pleasure' in the incarnation as a central act in the mystery of the divine saving will. Further, the new year conjured up associations with the pagan god Janus and the influence of old divinities and spirits. It was these, in particular, that the collect unequivocally placed under the power of the 'name' of the beloved Son. The petition that the faithful abound in good works was the church's response to the licentious cavorting that marked the Janus festivities.

Yet the prayer has another layer of meaning. The Latin text corresponds in structure, content and vocabulary the Vulgate Latin translation of Ephesians 1:3-2:10. It speaks of the free and bounteous grace of God. It denotes the fullness of blessings that come in Christ, and the continuing power of Christ's name over every situation and evil. In this it calls the faithful to abound in good works, works which correspond to the blessings of God, are worthy of the name of the beloved Son, and so pleasing to God. On reflection this prayer provides a good test of those easily forgotten new year resolutions!

First Reading

Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10

Today's First Reading tells the story of the proclamation of the Word of God after the exiles had returned home. The physical walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt to keep the returning exiles safe; the 'spiritual walls' of the Law are read, also to keep the returning exiles safe.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 18:8-10. 15. R Jn 6:63

Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.

A natural counterpart to today's First Reading, this section of Psalm 18 is a song in praise of the great value of the Law and the blessings which the Law brings to those who remain faithful to it.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

We continue our reading of this last section of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians which we began last week. Paul uses the analogy of the body to explore the theme of unity in diversity and diversity in unity, especially in the community of believers.

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

This Sunday, we begin our reading of Luke's Gospel. Luke opens with the reason he is putting pen to paper, and then takes us to the synagogue in Nazara (Nazareth). In a majestic scene, Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and then proclaims that this prophecy has been fulfilled even as they listen.

Reflection

We have just listened to the Word of God proclaimed. And this is something which has been done all throughout the history of our salvation. When Christians gather for prayer; when the Jewish people – our ancestors-in-the-faith – gather for prayer, we listen to the Word of God. Our First Reading tells us so.

When the Israelites returned to their land after the Exile in Babylon – about five hundred years before the time of Jesus – the land was in a pretty sorry state. One of their first tasks was to re-build the walls of the city. Now we who do not live in walled cities may miss the significance of this act. For if the city had strong walls, then it was safe and secure. And so once Nehemiah the Governor had completed this task of securing the city, they do something else to keep them safe. Something far more important, actually. They gather and listen to the Word of God. And they listened to this Word proclaimed for some time. Ezra, priest and scribe, read from the Book of the Law from “early morning till noon” and “all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.”

What the Israelites did two and a half thousand years ago, we still do: “All the people: men, women, and children old enough to understand” gather; so do we. The Book of the Law was solemnly enthroned: we do the same. “Then Ezra” blesses “the Lord, the Great God, and all the people raise their hands and answer, ‘Amen! Amen!’” and the people kneel and prostrate themselves before God; so do we. Ezra the priest reads and gives the sense so that the people understand what is read; so do we. Finally, the assembly is dismissed in joy and thanksgiving; and so are we.

These elements would go on to form the liturgy of the synagogue where the Word of God was proclaimed. And the Word of God which was read to the gathered Israelites, which was read in the synagogue liturgy, is, as the Psalms tells us, perfect and refreshing to the soul. It is trustworthy and is wisdom for the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, gladdening the heart and enlightening the eye. God’s word is holy and lasts forever; for the Word of God is true and just.

It was this same synagogue liturgy in which Jesus took part on the Sabbath Day in Nazara in Galilee, where he had been brought up. Men and women and children old enough to understand had gathered. The scroll of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah is handed to Jesus. Jesus unrolls the scroll and begins to read:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.

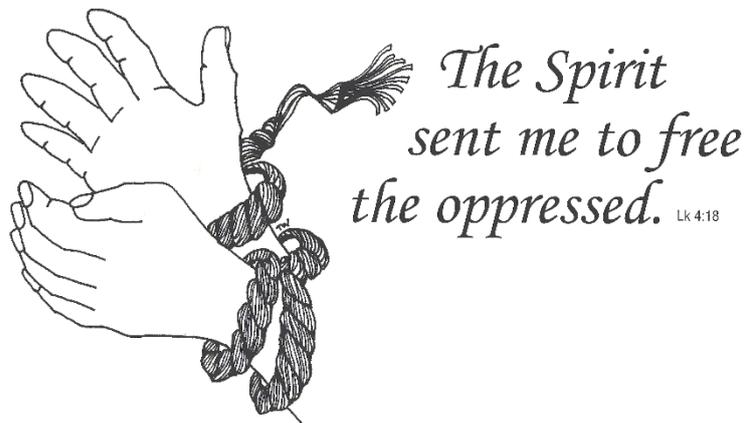
And then Jesus says the most astounding thing: “This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.”

What the Israelites did after they had returned from Exile; what Jesus did in the synagogue in Nazara, we do today. We gather and listen to the Word of God. We honour the book in which the pages of the Word of God are written. We bless God

for his presence in what we hear. The Word of God is given sense for us by another. These elements form our own Liturgy of the Word.

But when we read from the Word of God, we are not reading a story from long ago. We are not reading something which is dead. Our reading of the Word of God is not leisure time. Rather, we read something which is alive. Whatever we read from the Word of God, we read the mighty acts of God here and now.

Just as when we celebrate the sacraments we do not merely re-enact some past event. Rather, we are caught up in the action of God in the world now. Our celebration of any liturgy, our reading of the Word of God proclaims what happens today. This is why Jesus can say in the synagogue at Nazara but also to us here and now as we gather: "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen."



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we gather in joyful hope, singing a new song to all the earth, let us offer our prayers to our Father, who restores and revives all faithful hearts who seek grace and blessing.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all Bishops as they prepare for the Synod in 2023. May they always be true to their calling, fruitful in the work of leading the faithful and draw all they meet to embrace the Gospel message.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Church of Australia and the work of the Plenary Council. May the preparations for the second assembly in July in Sydney be fruitful and true to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders that they may be fully conscious of the need to be just towards all their people and to work towards the health of our earth's climate and the support of our damaged environment.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for growth toward Christian unity, that the Spirit of God will help us recognise all that we hold in common as members of the Body of Christ and help us to cooperate in confronting the issues of poverty, violence and neglect.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those suffering from COVID-19 through ill health, loss of employment, stress of frontline health work or loss of family members in isolation. May they be strengthened through the love and support of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those suffering in the world, that Christians will proclaim liberty to captives, give blind people new sight, set the downtrodden free and proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

(Pause) Lord hear us

Conclusion

Father, you hear the prayers of your people and grant us the strength and courage to be faithful to the mission you have called us to live. Therefore, we make these and all our prayers through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, your son, Our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Always on this first of days. D. Dufner/R. Bonighton. 532
As the grains of wheat. M. Haugen. 194
Christ is made the sure foundation. J. M. Neale et. al./ H. Purcell. 482
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 204
Lord, you give the great commission. J. Rowthorn/ C. Taylor. 313
O Christ the great foundation. S. S. Wesley. 483
One bread, one body. J. Foley SJ. 193
Praise to you, O Christ our saviour. B. Farrell. 407
There is one Lord. J. Berthier. 346
The Spirit of God. L. Deiss. 185
The voice of God. P. Icarus/ W. Greatorex. 476
Ubi caritas/ Where true love and charity are found. Gregorian Chant. 319
Ubi caritas. Taize Chant. 324
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 523
Where there is charity and love. R. Connolly. 323

AOV1

I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 49
Gather us together. O. Alstott. 111
One bread, one body. J. Foley SJ. 129
Praise to you, O Christ our saviour. B. Farrell. 28
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 86

AOV2

As grains of wheat. L. Rosania. 153
Sing a new song to the Lord. T. Dudley-Smith/ D. Wilson. 76

AOV4Kids

For the journey. G. Homes. 128
Take and eat. M. Russell. 114
The table of God. F. P. O'Brien. 8
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

CWB

Go now, you are sent forth. Leo Watt OFM. 690
The Spirit of God. Lucien Deiss. 832

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Gather your people, O Lord. Bob Hurd. 490
One bread, one body. John Foley SJ. 579
See us, Lord, about your altar. John Greally. 593
The voice of God. Luke Connaughton. 621

Additional selections by Chris deSilva

Forth in the peace of Christ we go. James Quinn SJ. 489

God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 495
Take the word of God with you. James Harrison. 607

S&S2

Your words, Lord, are spirit and life. Bob Hurd. 248
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 345
Isaiah 61. Matt Maher. 348

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 18: *Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.*
Psalm 18: Graham Cox. CWB 329
Psalm 19 (18): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 58
Lord you have the words: Paul Mason. PM pg. 6 (Alternative Response)
Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. LPC Tony Alonso p.88

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) *based on Ps 97 (98)* [Gathering, Recessional]
Your words (FWS) *based on Ps 18(19)* [Gifts]
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]
Live in the light (TWB) [Gifts, Communion]
The light of my life (TCS) [Gifts, Reflection]

The laws of God
gladden the
heart.

Ps 19:8

