

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time



Over the last three weeks, the Sunday Gospel Readings have revealed Jesus Christ's presence on earth through the magi's encounter with the Lord, Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, and the wedding at Cana. This week, we bear witness to his inaugural address in a synagogue in Nazareth. Having been handed a scroll, he found a passage from Isaiah:

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and
recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.'
Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the
attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked
intently at him.
He said to them,
"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your
hearing."*

Jesus' mission includes bringing glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the spiritually blind, and freedom to the oppressed. We are grateful to be among his beneficiaries and have been grafted onto his mission by way of our baptism. We identify as beloved sons and daughters of God. Unfortunately, some sibling rivalry exists which can distract us from our mission.

Each of us is unique. It is not uncommon, at times, to believe that we are terminally unique and that the spiritual solution which has worked for countless others is ineffective for us. We might tell ourselves that our situation is so unique that no one else will understand.

In other instances, we may separate ourselves from others by making unfair comparisons. We tend to compare our insides to other peoples' outsides and, when shame is activated, we question our own value and dignity. This is far from the attitude of Christian love and service which is found at the heart of the gospel. The work of recovery frees us from pride and unites us with the body of Christ.

Early Christians struggled with similar interpersonal difficulties as they became followers of Jesus. We have heard several examples of the disciples' concerns for honor and status among their peers. This Sunday's Second Reading from Saint Paul warns them of pride and division:

*As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many,
are one body, so also Christ.*

*God has so constructed the body
as to give greater honor to a part that is without it,
so that there may be no division in the body,
but that the parts may have
the same concern for one another.
If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it;
if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.*

*Now you are Christ's body,
and individually parts of it.
Some people God has designated in the church to
be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers;
then, mighty deeds;
then gifts of healing, assistance, administration,
and varieties of tongues.
Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?
Do all work mighty deeds?
Do all have gifts of healing?
Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?*

The presence of addiction in our family coupled with our unguided response was repressing our contribution to the body of Christ. Instead of comparing what we know about our family with what we don't know about others', we are given new tools and principles to help us properly order our lives. Recovery gives us the opportunity to re-engage the gifts that God has given us. As we remain open to our role in Christ's mission through recovery, more is revealed about the great plans that God has for us.

- What spiritual gifts have you been given that allow you to share in the mission of Jesus?
 - What new, surprising gifts are being discovered through faith and recovery?

- What factors tend to keep you separated from your brothers and sisters in Christ?
 - What part do you play in the separation?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

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