

THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

January 27, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *“Gracious God, you have revealed your word to us. Your word is always near to us. Open our minds to hear your word, our mouths to speak your word and our hearts to cherish your word. Amen.”*

Response to last week’s word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week’s Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: In the first reading, the people listen intently as Ezra proclaims the law of God. In the Gospel, the people listen as Jesus proclaims himself to be the fulfillment of God’s law or word. Paul calls for unity in a community blessed with many diverse gifts.

Let us listen to God’s word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

When the Israelites return from exile, not only have the cities to be rebuilt and the land restored, but the people have to be rededicated to God and his Word. Ezra, the priest/scribe, is entrusted with the spiritual renewal and rededication of his people. In today’s reading, Ezra is leading the people in a “covenant renewal” ceremony, at the center of which is a long proclamation of God’s Word (from sunrise to mid-day). The people are very moved as they listen to God’s Word. Everyone is weeping. They realize how they have been unfaithful to God and how much they have missed hearing his Word. The rededication ceremony concludes with a feast.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 19

The psalm celebrates the goodness and beauty of God’s law, which to the Israelites is the same as God’s Word.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

The Corinthian community is plagued by factions of varying kinds. In today’s reading, Paul is preaching unity without diminishing the value of diversity. Just as each of our physical body parts must work together to ensure the proper functioning of our whole body, so must all the members of the Church – the Body of Christ – work together. Mutual respect, cooperation and support should characterize the interaction among the members of the community. *Each* gift is valuable and should be used to build up the community.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

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

This gospel joins together the prologue or opening verses of Luke’s Gospel and a visit of Jesus to a synagogue in his home town of Nazareth.

In the opening verses, Luke addresses Theophilus (“friend or lover of God”), who may have been a wealthy patron of Luke. Luke tells us that his gospel is *not* an eyewitness account but one drawn from a tradition that is authoritative and can be relied on.

Then Luke tells us that Jesus’ preaching in Galilee has been anointed and well received in all of the synagogues.

In the final part of today’s gospel (4:14-21), Jesus reads in his home synagogue a passage from Isaiah 61.

The verses are often called Jesus' "Inaugural Address" or "Mission Statement". When he finishes reading, he makes a bold proclamation. He says:

*Today this scripture
is fulfilled in your hearing.*

Jesus is saying that *he* is the one filled with the Spirit as spoken by the prophet. He is the one who will inaugurate a new era of deliverance especially for the poor and oppressed. Clearly, Jesus was not going to be a political or military Messiah as the people expected.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse in the Gospel caught your attention. Why?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. The scene described in the first reading is very emotional. All the people are weeping as they listen to the Word of God being proclaimed. When did the Scriptures start to become alive for you?

3. "*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit . . .*" Can you name one time when you felt the power of the Spirit at work in you?

4. In the Gospel, Jesus says that he has come to "bring glad tidings to the poor." How does your parish seek to continue this mission of Jesus today? How can you participate in this central part of Jesus' mission?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God's word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Choose a phrase or verse from Jesus' Inaugural Address and keep it in your heart all week. Be more aware of how the Spirit expects you to bless those around you and your parish with the gift(s) he has given you.

SHARED PRAYER ON THE READINGS

Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestions: "*Dear Jesus, please open my heart to more clearly hear your word spoken to me and the grace to respond more fervently.*" "*Holy Spirit, please help me to recognize my own gifts and appreciate the gifts of all others you send into my life.*"

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION.

FACILITATOR: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Lord God, you have given us your revealed word as spiritual food to nourish your people, and to strengthen your church as the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. May we recognize and partake of this food when we gather at the table of the Word.