

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time C2025

Two Sundays ago, we celebrated the Baptism of our Lord at the Jordan River by the hands of John the Baptist. That baptism marked the end of his private life and the beginning of his public ministry. Last Sunday, we saw our Lord invited in a wedding in Cana where he transformed water into wine. That was his first miracle and the beginning of many of the deeds he would perform in his ministry.

In today's Gospel our Lord appears in a Synagogue and makes his first preaching. We have to know that in the Synagogue, there was no professional ministry of the word. The president of the Synagogue would invite any distinguished person present to speak and, then, discussion and talk would follow. That is how our Lord got his chance to interpret and comment the Scriptures that day for the assistance.

Today as it was in the past, the word of God, besides the Eucharist, is at the center of our life as Christians and disciples of Jesus. It is the word of God that guides us and inspires us in the many things we do as the Church. Without the word of God, it would be difficult and even impossible to distinguish the Christian community from other gatherings, like a football club or an association of friends. The word of God is given us so that by meditating it we build our relationships with God and with one another, and so contribute to the unity of the body Christ.

The word of God that our Lord read that day was a passage from the prophet Isaiah 61: 1-3.

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 a recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

What our Lord did in that interpretation was to attribute to himself the words of the prophet Isaiah, confirming thereby that the messianic time is now fulfilled in his person. "*Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing*", he says. If the messianic time is fulfilled in his person, it means literally that he is the messiah by the hands of whom God is visiting and consoling his people. He is the fulfillment of the longing of Israel in the awaiting of the Messiah.

In truth, the passage of Isaiah summarizes the mission that God the Father has given our Lord and which he had to execute for the salvation of the world. The salvation he has to bring to the world is a whole, in all its dimensions, bodily and spiritual, individual and social.

The Father has sent him to bring consolation to the afflicted and comfort to the needy. His presence in the world is an inauguration of a time of grace and visitation from God. He is endowed with the Holy Spirit by the Father to set free those who are under oppression and live in suffering. This time is a time of liberation and blessing, where the victory over every kind of oppression is offered, where all the chains of servitude would be broken, all the disease healed, and the poor would finally be able to rejoice and be happy.

As we listen to this program of our Lord's mission, let us remember that "Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday, and he will be the same tomorrow". (Hebrews 13: 8). May we bring to him our problems and difficulties, our burden and worries. He is able to rescue us and make our burdens easy, because this is the reason why he was sent into the world.

The mission of our Lord is destined to everybody, because all are God's people in spite of the diversity of their culture, nation, race and language. That is what St Paul reminds the Corinthians. The comparison he uses in this regard is really eloquent: the body may have many parts, but all make up only one body. So are the Christians in Jesus Christ. "*For in one spirit they were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit*".

Consequently, the Church is a gathering of people of all nations, races and languages. Each one should be welcomed and fill home, independently of his cultural or intellectual background. Though the Church is diverse, yet it forms a unity; though its members are different, yet they are one people. In other words, our differences should not be an occasion of division and tensions, but rather an opportunity of building together Christ's body we are called to be. Our differences should also help enrich and complete one another as we take advantage of the gifts others bring in our midst.

As individual and as community, we need one another, like the hand that needs the eye, or the ear that needs the foot, in order to allow the body to function in good shape and in harmony. Because we are one body, we have to live in solidarity with one another. That is what St. Paul renders when he says, "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy".

For our spiritual growth and the wellbeing of our society, we have to work together. We have to maintain a vision of a whole of which we are part. We have a big responsibility, not only toward ourselves, but to the whole body of Christ to which we belong. Moreover, we have to see ourselves as guardians of our brothers and sisters by making the problems of our society our own problems.

Let me finish by repeating that at the heart of our life is the word of God. The word brings us together as one people in spite of our differences and charismas. For that reason we have to care for one another as Christ did for us.

Nehemiah 8: 2-4a, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corinth 12: 12-30; Luke 1: 1-4; 4: 14-21



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