

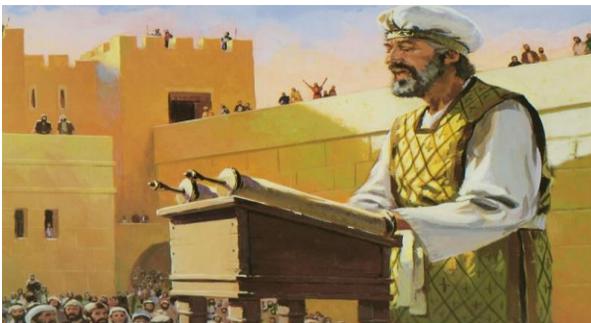
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 23, 2022

January 23, 2022 is the Third Sunday in Ordinary time. The readings today reveal a little history of people from the Old Testament and how strongly they felt the Spirit and the Word of the Lord. We also get a glimpse of Jesus' development and teaching ministry from the new Testament.

This week there are two important people who are part of the First reading. Nehemiah and Ezra. Nehemiah lived some 500 years before Jesus. He had become an important leader during his time. This story highlights what happened and how the Israelites developed and responded to what was to come with Jesus. During Nehemiah's time many Israelites had been captured and exiled to Babylonia. Eventually they were released and were being returned to Jerusalem in the southern part of what is now Israel and Palestine. But Jerusalem had almost been destroyed during the battles and would not be fit for its people to return. Nehemiah asked the King for permission to go to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city walls and improve conditions. He stayed for 12 years and even served as governor of Judea, the region where Jerusalem is located. The first reading takes place in the public square of Jerusalem with Ezra who was a priest and a scribe. He took notes and read important information to the people. His reading that day was from the Book of Law which had been given to the people from God through Moses many years ago. The occasion of this reading is the presentation of the Law to all men, women and even children who were old enough to understand. This was a significant and formal occasion because of the effort made to present the reading to everyone. It is also very important to us because the Book of Law is most likely the Hebrew Torah (meaning "Instruction," "Teaching," or "Law"). **The first five books of the Hebrew Torah are the same first five books in the Christian Old Testament,** (The books are named: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Do you recognize them?) When used in that sense, Torah means the same as the "Pentateuch." In other words, the Hebrew religion has similar readings to the Christian.

In the first reading Ezra stood above the crowd on a high wooden platform and opened the large scroll so everyone could see it. He read for many hours from daybreak until midday and the people stood and raised their hands high to show their reverence (a profound respect) and love that comes from deep inside yourself. This is how the people listened to the word of God!



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 23, 2022

First Reading (Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10)

All the people came together
and stood in the open area in front of the Water Gate.
They asked Ezra the teacher to read to them from the Law of Moses
that the LORD had given for his people.

So on the first day of the seventh month
Ezra the priest came with the Law
And stood before the crowd of men and women.

Everyone who was able to understand was there.

From early morning till noon

Ezra read the Law of Moses aloud in front of the Water Gate. (a flood gate)

They all listened carefully,
as Ezra stood and read from the wooden platform
that had been built for him.

The platform was very high,
and everyone could see Ezra as he opened the Book of the Law.

And when he opened it, they all stood up.

Ezra praised the wonderful LORD God,
and the people shouted, "Amen! Amen!"

They bowed low to the ground and worshiped the LORD.

How did the people respond
to Ezra's reading?

The men who were on the platform with him translated what he read
and explained to the people what it meant.

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher,
and the Levites who had been teaching the people
all said, "Don't be sad or cry!

This is a special day for the LORD your God"

They said this because the people cried when God's Law was
read to them.

Nehemiah told the people,
"Enjoy your good food and wine
and share what you have
with everyone who didn't have any to bring.

Don't be sad!

This is a special day for the LORD,
and he will make you happy and strong."

The word of the Lord

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 23, 2022

After the reading Nehemiah tells us that the people respected and revered the Lord. The people's behavior showed reverence for the reading and very possibly fear for the high standards they were supposed to follow. They were told not to be sad or cry. Most important they were asked to share any food and drink they had brought with them for the long day. Why is this important? What would you feel if you were there?

The next reading is the Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 19:7, 8, 14). **Read the Psalm out loud to someone and discuss which lines make you both feel better and closer to God. Underline them in red. Tell us why you have chosen these lines.**

Responsorial Psalm 19:7, 8, 14 (R/: Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.)

**The Law of the LORD is perfect;
it gives us new life.
His teachings last forever,
and they give wisdom
to ordinary people.
R/: Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.**

**The LORD's instruction is right;
it makes our hearts glad.
His commands shine brightly,
and they give us light.
R/: Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.**

**Let my words and my thoughts
be pleasing to you, LORD,
because you are my mighty rock
and my protector.
R/: Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.**

The second reading (**First letter of Paul to the Corinthians**) focuses on how we have become part of the body of Christ. When we were first baptized, God's Spirit was given to us and because of that we all share the gifts we were given. Paul tells us that because of the baptism we belong to one body. It does not matter where we come from or how different we are, Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, or how we got there, we all belong to the same body and like a body there are many parts having different functions that are needed for the body to work. Even the differences between us are beneficial in helping the community work well. That community is the Catholic church. We inherited different gifts from the Spirit that improve our community. There are many tongues (languages). Some of us speak English, some Spanish, others German, Italian, Russian or some other language. Some can sing while others can make speeches, arrange flowers, can paint or ice-skate, or have some other special gift. No matter what, they become a part of the whole and make

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 23, 2022

the community a better place. As Paul describes it in this letter, **“God’s Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ”**.

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27)

Brothers and sisters:

**The body of Christ has many different parts,
just as any other body does.**

Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles

Some of us are slaves, and others are free.

**But God’s Spirit baptized each of us
and made us part of the body of Christ.**

Now we each drink from that same Spirit.

Our bodies don’t have just one part.

They have many parts.

Together you are the body of Christ.

Each one of you is part of his body.

The word of the Lord.

What special gift do you have and how might you use it to help your family and our community? What can you do to make life better for those around you?

This brings us to the final reading for today, **The Gospel according to Luke (4:14-21)**.

Luke begins the Gospel by telling someone named Theophilus that he was writing a narrative of Jesus’ early ministry and an account of his first public teaching in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth.



A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke (4: 14-21)

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 23, 2022

**Jesus returned to Galilee with the power of the Spirit.
News about him spread everywhere.
He taught in the Jewish meeting places,
and everyone praised him.**

You must remember that Jesus was Jewish and is attending a synagogue on a Sabbath Saturday in his childhood home of Nazareth. His reputation had already spread throughout the land and he was invited to do one of the Torah readings and a short homily.

**Jesus went back to Nazareth, where he had been brought up,
and as usual he went to the meeting place on the Sabbath.
When he stood up to read from the Scriptures,
he was given the book of Isaiah the prophet.
He opened it and read,**

**“The Lord’s Spirit has come to me,
because he has chosen me.
to tell the good news to the poor.
The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners,
to give sight to the blind,
to free everyone who suffers,
and to say, ‘This is the year the Lord had chosen.’”**

**Jesus closed the book,
then handed it back to the man in charge and sat down.**

**Everyone in the meeting place looked straight at Jesus.
Then Jesus said to them,
“What you have just heard me read has come true today.”
The gospel of the Lord.**

When Jesus unrolled the scroll and began to read what was written there, he told the people that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him. Jesus wanted everyone to know what he came to do. That is what he means when he says **“what you have just heard me read has come true today”**. Jesus came to teach, to let the poor know they are loved and will be cared for, those in captivity will be rescued, the blind will see, the lame will walk”.