

January 26, 2025
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 1:1-4, & 4:14-21

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "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."

Background:

The first verses of Luke's Gospel acknowledge that other accounts of Jesus' ministry have been written, and what Luke intends to accomplish by writing his Gospel. He is going to write an orderly narrative, a historical work, at least as he understands it in his day. He also says that he is going back to what has been handed down through the eyewitnesses and the ministers of the Word. He does not include himself in either of these two groups, indicating that he himself is not a witness to the events he is recording. His Gospel has been written for an individual, Theophilus. Therefore, Luke's first intention in writing may not be for it to be used by the Christian community as they gather for prayer and/or to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Its purpose is to reassure Theophilus that what has been taught about Jesus is accurate and reliable. Luke may also be aware that Theophilus may share his Gospel with other Christians at these events.

After the introduction, the text moves to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Luke's account. Luke summarizes Jesus' Galilean ministry and states that Jesus then returned to his home in Nazareth and went to the synagogue to join his family and neighbors as he had done through his early life. It is likely that the lesson for the day had been selected, but Jesus unrolled the scroll to the section from Isaiah that he desired. Jesus' teaching makes the bold proclamation that today in Nazareth in this synagogue this passage from Isaiah is being fulfilled. The passage that Jesus reads and proclaims is saying that the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed will be finding deliverance.

Luke's Gospel will present a Jesus who is present to those in his society who were forgotten and overlooked by the religious leaders of the day. They are a people who are also living under the oppression of Roman rule. Most experience a daily struggle for survival.

Throughout Luke's Gospel there is a sense that Jesus is acting under the power of the Spirit of God. That is evident in how Jesus has returned to Nazareth and reads from The Prophet and teaches in his home town.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever tried to share your belief in Jesus with another? Where did you begin?
2. What strikes you in Luke's intention in writing a Gospel? What feelings arise within you as you hear Luke's stated purpose?
3. How are you and the Christian community better off because of Luke's effort to write a Gospel?
4. What does the fact that Luke took the time to write his Gospel even though others existed say to you?

5. Imagine that you are among those gathered that day in Jesus' hometown synagogue. What are some of the things you would be thinking and feeling as you hear Jesus read from Isaiah?
6. Jesus deliberately found and read a portion of the prophet Isaiah that says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor..." What goes through you as you hear Jesus read this passage from Isaiah?
7. Has God anointed you? For what? Have you ever asked God why he has anointed you?
8. Can you talk with God about whatever thoughts or feelings have arisen within you from reading this Gospel text?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for January 26, 2025, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, and they listened attentively to the book of the law. He opened the scroll so that the people might see it; and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and the people, their hands raised high, answered, "Amen, amen!" Then they bowed down before the Lord. Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand. Then Nehemiah and Ezra the priest-scribe and the Levites said: "Today is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep"—for the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. He said further: "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our Lord. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength!"

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
His decree is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. His precepts are right, rejoicing the heart;
The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;
The ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just. Let my words and thoughts find favor before you.

Brothers and sisters: As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts are one body, so also Christ. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. The body is not a single part. God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. Indeed, the parts that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, the parts that are less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety. But 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?

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as the eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: 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. He handed the scroll 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."

Excerpts from Nehemiah 8:2-10; Psalm 19:8-10, 15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; and Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for January 26th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The Gospel, from Luke, follows after Jesus' baptism and temptation, relating his return to Galilee and to Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry. He goes to the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath, and reads from where Isaiah had written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me, to bring glad tidings to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and proclaim liberty to captives, and a year acceptable to the Lord." After Jesus rolls up the scroll, he says, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

The other readings have additional references to reading of scripture getting the attention of the people, reason to rejoice, and the different gifts and benefits of belonging to the Lord. In the first reading from Nehemiah, Ezra read before the people, out of the book of the law, interpreting it so that all could understand. Because the words brought them to tears, Ezra and the Levites instructed them, "Rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength, for today is holy to our Lord!" Psalm 19 proclaims, "The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple; his precepts are right, rejoicing the heart." The response to the psalm is from John's Gospel, "Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life." In the second reading, from the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "All the parts of the body, though many, are one body. We were all baptized into one body. You are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. There may be no division in the body." Once again this week our Sunday Gospel leaves something out of the written sequence, in order to bring it back for us later. The temptation in the desert which follows Jesus' baptism will be brought to us as the Gospel for the first Sunday of Lent in early March. Doing that leaves one more Gospel story of a revealing nature to follow in the sequence of three epiphanies which we just completed. In the last three weeks we had the feast called Epiphany, with the visit from the Magi, then the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and then this past Sunday the changing of water to wine. The wine miracle at the wedding in Cana "was the beginning of his signs, and so revealed his glory." In this Sunday's Gospel, on another day near the beginning of his ministry, when Jesus tells those in Nazareth that "this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing," it is another revelation of his glory.

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!