

January 23, 2022
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 others' gospels have been written, and state 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 to us 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 or to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Its purpose is to reassure Theophilus that what has been taught about Jesus is accurate and reliable. However, Luke may be aware that Theophilus may share his gospel with other Christians at these events.

After this introduction, the gospel text for this Sunday skips over the section of Luke that describes the announcement of Jesus' birth, finding the boy Jesus in the temple, the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus' own baptism, and the temptations of Jesus in the desert. Among the part of Luke's gospel that is reserved for other Sundays are the two canticles that are part of the Church's daily prayer in the liturgy of the hours, The Canticles of Mary and of Zechariah.

Today's gospel text then returns to Luke where he gives a single-sentence summary of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. In contrast to the success in Galilee, Luke describes Jesus' presence in his home town of Nazareth, where he is among his family and relatives -- the people with whom Jesus has lived much of his life -- from the time he was an infant, through his youth and all of his adult life until his own baptism and taking on a public life. Here he enters his home synagogue of Nazareth and unrolls the scroll containing the prophet Isaiah, and reads from the prophet and gives his teaching. Jesus makes the bold proclamation that today in Nazareth, in this synagogue, this passage from Isaiah is being fulfilled. The passage that Jesus reads proclaims that the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed are 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. 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 read and taught in his hometown synagogue as well.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever tried to share your belief in Jesus with another? Where did you begin your explanation?
2. What strikes you most in Luke's opening statement of his intention in writing a gospel? What feelings arise within you as you hear Luke's intention?
3. How are you and the Christian community better off because of Luke's effort to write another gospel in addition to the ones that already existed at the time he was writing?
4. Does the fact that Luke took the time to write his gospel even though others existed at his time suggest anything to you?
5. Imagine that you are among those gathered that day in Jesus' hometown synagogue. What is going through you as Jesus motions for the scroll and begins to read?
6. Jesus deliberately finds and reads 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. What is in your heart as Jesus states that this passage is being fulfilled in your hearing?
8. Can you talk with God now about what Jesus did that day in his hometown synagogue, the significance of what he did for you, or anything that arose within you as you encountered this gospel today?

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.loom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is [https://fscclabeledtobe.org/](https://fsccllabeledtobe.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 23, 2022, 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

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for January 23rd, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. Like last week, we are getting into stories of the significant events at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Last week's gospel, from John, told of Jesus changing water to wine at the wedding in Cana. This week, in the Gospel from Luke, Jesus uses a scripture reading in the synagogue to declare his identity and purpose. Jesus was handed a scroll and found this passage from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed; to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." He said to them, "Today this passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

The other readings also refer to the opening of the scroll for a reading to the gathered people, declaring that the Lord's words are Spirit and life, and that the people are now, individually, parts of Christ's body through the Spirit. The first reading from Nehemiah says Ezra brought the law and opened the scroll, and the people wept as they heard the words, but he told them, "Today is holy to our Lord. Do not be saddened. Rejoicing in the Lord must be our strength." Psalm 19 declares, "The law of the Lord is perfect, giving wisdom to the simple and refreshing the soul." In the second reading, continuing from 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, "The body is not a single part. All the parts are one body. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body."

Joe

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