

Commentary on the Readings for January 27, 2019

The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

As we have in the past, we will begin with an explanation of the Gospel reading first in order to better understand how all the readings for today come together.

The **Gospel Reading** is from the *Gospel of Luke (1: 1- 4 and 4:14-21)*. St. Luke was known as the first historian of the Church, writing his own well-researched account of the many works of Jesus and then following that up with the beginnings of the early Church in the book we call *The Acts of the Apostles*. In today's account from Luke we have two widely separated portions of his Gospel. In the very beginning he explains his reasons for this new writing which reflects the beginnings of the Church based on the foundation of Jewish faith. He then goes on to describe one of Jesus' first public acts - teaching in the synagogue, wherein He reads aloud a portion of the prophecies of Isaiah. At the end, Jesus caps this reading from the Old Testament with the statement, "**Today, this prophecy has come to fulfillment in your hearing.**" Thus, we have the beginning of Jesus' role as teacher, Lord and Savior.

The **First Reading** is from the *Book of Nehemiah (8:2-10)*. In it we hear the priest, Ezra, reading from the "Book of The Law," presumably the *Book of Deuteronomy*. The time is probably early 5th century BC when a new wave of religious faith is sweeping Israel based on the Book of Deuteronomy and Ezra's revisions of the earlier books of the Pentateuch. Modern Judaism came from this new wave, and it was during this time that the concepts of *Life after Death, Heaven, and the Messiah* began to emerge — all new beginnings. It is little wonder that Ezra declares to his people "*do not be sad and do not weep, for joy in the Lord must be your strength.*"

The **Responsorial Psalm (19:8- 10, 15)** is a theological reflection, not on the Mosaic Law or the Deuteronomic Law, but on the divine moral law of God which is embedded in all mankind. The synonyms for "Law" used in each phrase (i.e., decrees, precepts, commands, fear and ordinances) are balanced with attributes of God (i.e. perfect, trustworthy, right, clear, pure and true). This divine moral law is God Himself, without beginning or end.

The **Second Reading** is taken from St. Paul's **First Letter to the Corinthians (12:12-30)**. In this passage, Paul is using the analogy of the human body to describe the Church as a community that is brought together in Christ to help each other get to heaven. In essence he is saying that each of us has been given a gift to help our fellow brothers and sisters. Some people are given greater gifts or roles in the community, but all the people and all the gifts are important and necessary to make the community successful. We are that community today. We are the Church, and it is up to each of us to do our part in making our parish, our community and Church successful.

Therefore, at the beginning of this New Year, we should take stock of our gifts, our talents and our role, not only in the parish, but in God's Plan of Salvation which starts here in the parish. Then, with that as our beginning, we should make a new resolution to come closer to God by using our gifts for the benefit of others. Something to think about during your prayer time this week.

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