

2022 C 3rd Sunday Ordinary Time Jan. 23

In the 1st reading in Nehemiah's time, the people of God, Jews returned from Babylonian captivity and built up the city walls of Jerusalem needed building. And they gathered to hear the word of God and were built into a community in a celebration. They rejoiced in rediscovering their common roots, and the truth of what they were called to be **a truly chosen people of God.**

The passage Jesus read in the synagogue was a prophecy from the prophet Isaiah. In his very 1st sermon at Nazareth, instead of interpreting the passage for his listeners, Jesus simply ends his reading of the scripture with these words: **"Today this scripture is fulfilled in you hearing."** I guarantee you that nobody was expecting that! There was a pin-drop silence. Why? Because he was a local boy, a carpenter from a family of modest means had just announced that he was the Messiah, sent from God. How is that possible? the audience thought.

The nation of Israel had waited around 1,000 years for God to send His Messiah, His Anointed One. They expected him as a descendent of King David, strict observant of Jewish Law, a righteous judge, and a great military leader. They didn't expect that, one of their own would claim that title for himself. So, what was Jesus revealing about His nature and his plan for the world?

Being filled with the Spirit of the Lord and anointed, Jesus outlines His mission to bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty, justice and freedom to a people held in bondage in many ways.

Jesus meant these words literally. Poor are the people God is most concerned. Jesus identified himself with the least and lowest. He was born in poverty and died on the cross naked and empty-handed. In his life on earth, he set people free, healed the sick. He was a voice for the voiceless, stood for the oppressed, welcomed the rejects and looked out for the forgotten.

Christ came to bring a message of hope and salvation to a world for the love of God.

Jesus shows how God cares for the poor and the hurting. He loved them so much that He chose to walk in their shoes. And He calls his followers to do the same.

We, the followers of Christ gather for the celebration of Mass. We hear the word of God and participate in the banquet of the Lord. The readings and the homily at every Mass keep us in touch with our roots and the future to which God is calling us. It's a greater force for our unity as a Church. We are a community, the chosen people of God.

Although we are many parts and serve in different functions in the church, as St. Paul writes in our 2nd reading from 1 Corinthians, in participating the celebration of the Eucharist, we are becoming one body of Christ which we call the Church.

We might ask, using Paul's image, "What part of Christ's body are we? Are we part of Christ's mind, teaching the faith? Are we His heart, Showing the care of Christ? Are we Christ's hands, reaching out to help others? Are we His feet, taking the gospel message to people wherever we may meet them? Are we His ears, listening to the fears and anxieties of a weary culture? Are we His lips, speaking His truth? Are we part of His muscle, giving the church strength to shine? Are we His blood cells, fighting off errors?"

The readings and the homily each week bring something of the truth of Christ to us as a parish, speaking to our call, our circumstances, our state in life, our mission and our role in God's plan as part of the Body of Christ.

We, Catholics all over the world right now are in a Synod. Pope Francis inaugurated it on Oct. 10, 2021. One week later the Dioceses across the world set on a synodal journey at the local level. The word **Synod means coming together.**

The aim of the Synodal Church is to achieve **Communion, Participation, Mission.**” **Synodality indicates *walking together and listening to one another but above all to the Holy Spirit.*** To deepen this essential characteristic of the Church, this synod started with involving the faithful at local Churches across the world, promising to listen to all, especially to laypeople. This Synod will go on into year 2023.

Right now, the diocesan listening phase going on. At our parish level, with the pastor’s approval, Madeline Mauro came forward to carry out the process. She sat down with different groups of our parish before Christmas and had discussions based on the questions given by the Diocese. She compiled the outcome of the discussions and presented to me, the pastor. These proposals are made for how best we can be a better Church, the Body of Christ, as God’s people. In the upcoming pastoral and finance councils by the end of February will look into these proposals and adopt to implement the required measures as we journey together.

“In order to experience a Church and to live this gift of unity, we need to be open to the voice of the Spirit,” Pope Francis said. He also stressed that the Synod is not a parliament or an investigation into opinions, but “an ecclesial moment” whose director is the Holy Spirit. “Without the Spirit, there is no Synod.”

He also said that communion and mission describe the mystery of the Church. Communion expresses the very nature of the Church, according to the Second Vatican Council. We are ecclesial, or in communion with one another in the Lord.

Pope Francis also pointed out that ‘communion’ and ‘mission’ can risk remaining somewhat abstract, unless at every step and activity, real **involvement** on the part of each and all”. “All the baptized are called to take part in the Church’s life and mission.”