



3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Nehemiah 8:2–4a, 5–6, 8–10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8–10, 15 | **Response:** John 6:63c

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12–30

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 4:18

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:1–4, 4:14–21

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

... **T**oday, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The Word of God is not merely ink on a page, nor an echo from a distant past. It is living, active, and dynamic—able to pierce the heart, to stir the soul, to shape the world. And today, in this sacred place, we witness its power as Jesus stands before His people and declares a truth so bold, so revolutionary, that it will change everything.

He unrolls the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue, and His voice, steady and sure, proclaims: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free." Then, rolling up the scroll, He utters words that send a shockwave through the assembly: "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Today. Not yesterday, not some distant tomorrow. Today, in their midst, the Messiah stands. Today, salvation is not a dream deferred but a reality unfolding. The people are astonished, for they had long hoped for this moment, yet they struggle to comprehend that the One they know—the carpenter's son—is the One fulfilling this great prophecy.

But Jesus does not simply read the words; He embodies them. He does not offer vague promises; He inaugurates a mission. And that mission is clear: to lift up the lowly, to set free the burdened, to heal the brokenhearted. The kingdom of

God is not an abstract ideal—it is a tangible reality breaking into the world through Him.

This moment in the synagogue is not just history—it is a call to action. If the Word is truly alive, then it must take root in us, transform us, and send us forth as bearers of Christ’s mission. We cannot hear this Gospel and remain unchanged, for the work Jesus proclaims is not finished; it is entrusted to His disciples—to you and to me.

This is why, in our first reading, the people of Israel weep as Ezra reads the Law aloud. They hear in it not only God’s expectations but also the ways they have failed to live them. They realize the need for conversion, for renewal, for recommitment to being God’s people. Yet Ezra does not leave them in sorrow; he urges them to rejoice, for God’s law is not a burden but a gift. It is given not to condemn but to lead, not to oppress but to set free.

We, too, must ask ourselves: How do we receive God’s Word? Do we merely listen to it, or do we allow it to shape our lives? In a time when the Church places greater emphasis on Scripture than ever before, do we take up the invitation to immerse ourselves in it? The Bible is no longer meant to gather dust on a shelf. It is a living conversation with God, an encounter with the One who speaks to us today.

And if we take His Word seriously, then we must also take seriously its demands.

Saint Paul reminds us that we are the Body of Christ. Each one of us has been given a role, a gift, a calling. Not all are called to be prophets, not all to be teachers, not all to be healers—but each has been given something, and each is necessary.

How often do we undervalue our own gifts or, worse, look down upon the gifts of others? How often do we divide ourselves—by race, by status, by education, by ministry—rather than recognizing that we are one in Christ? The Corinthians struggled with this, and so do we. But Paul makes it clear: in the body, every part matters. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you.” The head cannot say to the feet, “I have no use for you.” We belong to one another.

Our Mission: To Proclaim, To Heal, To Set Free If Jesus has come to bring good news to the poor, then we must ask: Do we hear the cries of the impoverished in our own community? Do we see their struggles, not as problems to be solved from a distance, but as the suffering Christ Himself?

If He has come to proclaim liberty to captives, then we must ask: What chains still bind us? Chains of injustice, of oppression, of sin? Are we willing to stand with those who suffer, to speak for those who have no voice, to work for a world where dignity is not a privilege but a birthright?

If He has come to give sight to the blind, then we must ask: Are we willing to see the world as He does? To look beyond appearances, beyond differences, beyond divisions? To open our eyes to the truth that every person we encounter carries the image of God?

The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Us We do not do this alone. The same Spirit that anointed Jesus has been poured out upon us. In baptism, we were claimed for this mission. In the Eucharist, we are strengthened for the journey. And in prayer, we are given the grace to see as Christ sees, to love as Christ loves, to serve as Christ serves.

Saint Oscar Romero once said: “A Church that does not unite itself to the poor is not truly the Church of Jesus Christ.” The mission of Christ is our mission. And it demands more than words—it demands our lives. It demands that we step out of our comfort, that we live our faith with courage, that we bring the light of the Gospel into the places where darkness still lingers.

So today, let us not be spectators to the Gospel. Let us be participants in its unfolding. Let us ask ourselves:

Where in my life is Christ calling me to be His hands and His voice, to bring good news to the poor and freedom to the oppressed? What areas of my heart still resist the transforming power of God’s Word? Where do I need to open my eyes, my mind, my heart? How can I make today—not tomorrow, not someday—but today the moment where I truly live out the mission Christ has given me? The Spirit of the Lord is upon us. The mission is before us. And the time is now. May we, like Christ, proclaim with our lives:

“Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

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Fr Matthew Charlesworth, S.J.**

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.