

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have taken place among us, exactly as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received.

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him.

He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.'

(Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The name Theophilus literally means 'friend of God' or 'lover of God', and both the Gospel of Luke and Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, are addressed to him. However, it is not known who this man was.
- Of all the gospels, the Gospel of Luke is the most explicit and frequent in its references to the Holy Spirit.
- The Jewish Sabbath runs from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday.
- All Jewish men who have become 'bar mitzvah' ('son of the law') are eligible to come forward and read the sacred scrolls.
- Jesus would have been attending the important Saturday morning synagogue prayers.

EXPLORING THE WORD

It is highly unusual in the sequence of Sunday gospels to have two texts from completely different chapters, but such is the case this week. The opening text from Luke claims that he has a special purpose in writing his gospel. It is clear that Luke did not know Jesus personally—indeed, he places himself among those to whom the story of Jesus 'was handed down', first by eyewitnesses and then by ministers of the Word. Luke is of the second or third generation of Christians, and his purpose is to 'write an ordered account' to instruct Theophilus, so that 'he can learn how well founded the teaching is'.

The Lectionary then moves to this central text in Luke, in which Jesus' mission and mandate are proclaimed. The text from Isaiah that Jesus chose relates to the coming of the Messiah or the 'anointed one'. Two weeks ago, we read the text describing the baptism of Jesus, in which the Spirit had indeed been given to him and he had indeed been anointed by God as the one who carries God's favour. In today's text, Jesus announces how he will fulfil his messianic mission of bringing hope to the hopeless. The gospel continues with Jesus accomplishing this mandate. Luke includes many stories of Jesus bringing good news to the poor, raising those who are downtrodden and bringing sight to the blind. His whole ministry centres on living to fulfil his mission. Indeed, 'this text is being fulfilled today even as you listen'.

- Are there ways in which you can see yourself as among the 'poor', the 'blind', the 'downtrodden' or the 'captive'?
- In what ways does Jesus relieve these limitations?
- What do these terms mean in the present day? Who are the downtrodden, poor, captive and blind today? What is the good news that our world needs?
- In what ways are we called to be bringers of good news to these situations?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'So that you may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received.' Are you convinced of the truth of what you have been hearing and learning?
- How do you bring good news to others?
- This week, offer the gift of yourself to someone who is downtrodden, or be 'good news' to someone who is in need.
- Have you ever acted as a witness, either in a courtroom, at a wedding, on a legal document or simply to a traffic accident? What responsibilities come with acting as a witness? How did you feel? Were you up to the task? Share your experiences.
- Repeat often and contemplate this week:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has chosen me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.*

