

3rd Sunday (C)

- Before he begins to tell us the story of what Jesus did & taught, Luke wants his readers to recognize very clearly the passion that drives this Prophet of Galilee & what the goal of all his activity is.
- It's because he believes that Christians need to know the way the Spirit of God led Jesus, because to follow him, is to live the same way.
- Luke describes what Jesus does in the synagogue of his town: he stands up, receives the sacred book, looks for a passage from Isaiah, reads the text, closes the book, returns it & sits down.
- Everyone needs to listen attentively to the words chosen by Jesus because they explain the task/mission for which he feels sent by God.
- The passage he reads doesn't speak of organizing a more perfect religion, but of bringing liberation, hope, light & grace to the poorest & the most miserable in society.
- This is what Jesus reads: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners & recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*
- And then Jesus concludes by saying: *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*
- The Spirit of God is in Jesus, sending him to the poor & directing his entire life toward the neediest, the most oppressed & humiliated.
- Luke picks this up because he wants his community to know that it is for this purpose that we, his followers, must work.
- This is the course God, incarnate in Jesus, wishes to imprint on the history of humanity.
- The 'least' have to be the first to experience a more dignified, liberated & joyous life, that God wants from now on for all his children.
- The term - "the option for the poor" after Vatican II became the dictum for the Church, but it wasn't invented by some twentieth century theologians.
- Nor is it a fad in vogue after the Second Vatican Council.
- It is the option of the Spirit of God animating the entire life of Jesus.
- His followers are commissioned to establish it in human history.
- It is not possible to live as Jesus lived & make him known if we do not stand by the 'lowliest' in solidarity with all who are excluded.
- If what we as a church of Jesus do & proclaim is not perceived as good & liberating by those who suffer the most, what kind of gospel are we preaching? Which Jesus are we following?
- What kind of spirituality are we promoting?
- When we think of the 'poor' we are right to think in terms of economic poverty & the human misery that goes with it, but it means much more.
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- It refers to human need in all its dimensions, & especially to people's need for compassion & understanding - for love.
- The 'poor' are all those who are in need & in distress - Jesus is assuring them that in him God is answering their cry: *'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'*.
- Whatever our personal need & whatever the needs of our society, Jesus has come to draw us into the communion of love which is our most profound need – to be in communion with one another as human beings.
- At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry Luke presents this as the essence of Jesus' agenda; as disciples of Jesus we are encouraged by Jesus' assurance that our cry is being heard.
- We're also challenged to join Jesus in carrying on his mission to the poor – to all those in need of being included to live a dignified human life.
- As Paul assures us, we do this in different ways according to each person's special gifts of nature & grace.
- This is the importance of the Church, the Body of which each of us is a member - only together can we be the heart & hands of Jesus to the world.
- Only together can we call down the fire of God's love, harness for God the energies of love in our world, & welcome God's Spirit to renew the face of the earth.
- It matters that each of us plays our part in this.
- It matters that we welcome the part played by others.
- And it matters that we do it together as the Body of Christ in the world.
- This is the new Law given us by Jesus at the last supper: *'Love one another as I have loved you'*.
- This is the new covenant & the essence of Christianity.
- May it encourage us as we reflect together on the mission entrusted to us by Jesus.
- As Jesus rolls up the scroll & sits down in our midst what will be our response? Will we allow ourselves to be more deeply affected by the extraordinary news we have heard – God's Word & that of the media that informs us of the deprivation of various people?
- Or will this week be just like any other? The choice will be ours.