

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 9, 2022

Prayer for Reading 1:

They heard your saving words, O God; and they bent heads in tears, but then felt great joy in your mercy. Let us too be hearers and doers of your word. Then will our day be holy.

Reading I: [Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10](#)

Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, which consisted of men, women, and those children old enough to understand. Standing at one end of the open place that was before the Water Gate, he read out of the book from daybreak till midday, in the presence of the men, the women, and those children old enough to understand; and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. He opened the scroll so that all the people might see it — for he was standing higher up than any of the people —; and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, “Amen, amen!” Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground. Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read.

Then Nehemiah, that is, His Excellency, and Ezra the priest-scribe and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people: “Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep” — for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. He said further: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!”

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15](#)

R. (cf John 6:63c) Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.

R. Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye.

R. Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; The ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just.

R. Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart find favor before you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

R. Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

Questions for Reading 1:

1. Why does Ezra say “today” is holy? What is significant about “today” for Jesus? Do you live in the past or the future? What is the only time you have for sure? What happens to “now” if you spend all your time looking backward or forward?
2. Each of the readings today is similar in that someone is proclaiming God's word to an assembly. (Paul was writing to the Corinthians who were fighting over rank and status.) Do you think everything we would ever know was stated during Jesus’ time or does the Holy Spirit give us new insights as we need them?

Prayer for Reading 2:

Father, we thank you. Your gifts are great. From them words flow, smooth as nectar; they heal, or else they teach, often tell stories that lead Their hearers straight to heaven. Our finances suddenly balance. Holy Spirit, thank you. Let us all, fancy and plain, praise you.

Reading II: [1 Cor 12:12-30](#)

Brothers and sisters:

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, “Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body, “it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, “Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body, “it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you, “ nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.” Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the

church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

Questions for Reading 2:

1. Some people's gift is to diffuse tension in a meeting. Is this kind of gift more or less important than administering the parish, community or diocese? Why? What is your gift to the community?
2. If you had your choice of gifts which ones would you choose? Why? If you have a gift and you never use it, what will happen to it? Can you name some of your gifts?

Prayer for Gospel:

Jesus, rise, spread out the scroll —like Ezra, your priest-scribe —and declare to the people and to us that God is in our midst this day. Oh earth, you are holy now. Holy Spirit, touch our being and our doing. Let us feed and shelter the poor, welcome immigrants, free the prisoners, fix the climate crisis. Brush our days with grace.

Gospel: [Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21](#)

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Questions for Gospel:

1. Jesus went to Nazareth, his hometown. People there thought of him as Mary and Joseph's son. Suddenly he claims to be the Messiah. What would your reaction have been to such a declaration?
2. Jesus said he had been "anointed to bring glad tidings to the poor, ... liberty to captives, ... sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." Pope Francis talks about the glad tidings or the good news. Would you say that the graces of the Gospel constitute glad tidings: truth, unconditional mercy, and joy for everyone? Why do these "varied joys" sometimes need to be poured into new wineskins?

Good news. A single word—Gospel—that, even as it is spoken, becomes truth brimming with joy and mercy. We should never attempt to separate these three graces of the Gospel: its truth, which is non-negotiable; its mercy, which is unconditional and offered to all sinners; and its joy, which is personal and open to everyone.

This message can never be gloomy or indifferent, for it expresses a joy that is completely personal. It is "the joy of the Father, who desires that none of his little ones be lost" ([Evangelii Gaudium No 237](#)). It is the joy of Jesus, who sees that the poor have the good news preached to them, and that the little ones go out to preach the message in turn (ibid., 5) The joys of the Gospel are special joys. I say "joys" in the plural, for they are many and varied, depending on how the Spirit chooses to communicate them, in every age, to every person and in every culture. They need to be poured into new wineskins, the ones the Lord speaks of in expressing the newness of his message.

[Pope Francis: Find joy in the "little things."](#) America April 13, 2017

In Exile by Ron Rolheiser

The Church's Economic-Social Teachings

Most of us have been raised to believe that we have right to possess whatever comes to us honestly, either through our own work or through legitimate inheritance. No matter how large that wealth might be, it's ours as long as we didn't cheat anyone along the way. By and large,

this belief has been enshrined in the laws of democratic countries and we generally believe that it is morally sanctioned by the Christianity.

Partly this is all true, but it needs a lot of qualification. From scripture, through Jesus, through the social teachings of the churches, through papal encyclicals from Leo XIII through John Paul II, the right to private ownership and private wealth is mitigated by a number of moral principles. Let me list a number of those principles (which are taught with the weight of Ordinary Magisterium within Roman Catholicism and the ecclesial equivalent of that in most Protestant churches). For Roman Catholics, I will list the major references to church documents:

- God intended the earth and everything in it for the sake of all human beings. Thus, in justice, created goods should flow fairly to all. All other rights are subordinated to this principle. ([Gaudium et Spes](#) 69; [Popularum Progressio](#) 22) We do have a right to private ownership and no one may ever deny us of this right ([Rerum Novarum](#) 3-5, 14, [Quadregesima Anno](#) 44-56, [Mater et Magistra](#) 109) but that right is subordinated to the common good, to the fact that goods are intended for everyone. ([Laborem Exercens](#) 14) Wealth and possessions must be understood as ours to steward rather than to possess absolutely. ([Rerum Novarum](#) 18-19)
- No person (or nation) may have a surplus if others do not have the basic necessities. ([Rerum Novarum](#) 19; [Quadregesimo Anno](#) 50-51, [Mater et Magistra](#) 119-121 & 157-165; [Popularum Progressio](#) 230) Thus, no one may appropriate surplus goods solely for his own private use when others lack the bare necessities for life. ([Popularum Progressio](#) 23) People are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and if a person is in extreme necessity he has the right to take from the riches of others what he needs. ([Gaudium et Spes](#) 69)
- The present economic situation in the world must be redressed. ([Popularum Progressio](#) 6,26,32; [Gaudium et Spes](#) 66; [Octogesimus Adveniens](#) 43; [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#) 43) Thus the law of supply and demand, free enterprise, competition, the profit motive, and the private ownership of the means of production may not be given complete free reign. They are not absolute rights and are only good within certain limits. ([Popularum Progressio](#) 26; [Quadragesimo Anno](#) 88, 110)
- In regards to the private ownership of industry and the means of production, two extremes are to be avoided: Unbridled capitalism on the one hand, and complete socialism on the other. ([Quadregesimo Anno](#) 46, 55, 111-126)

- Governments must respect the principle of subsidiarity and intervene only when necessary. ([Rerum Novarum](#) 28-29; [Quadragesimo Anno](#) 79-80; [Mater et Magistra](#) 117-152) However when the common good demands it they not only may step in, they are obliged to do so. ([Popularum Progressio](#) 24, 33; [Mater et Magistra](#) 53; [Gaudium et Spes](#) 71) As well certain forms of property should be reserved for the state since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals. ([Quadragesimo Anno](#) 114; [Mater et Magistra](#) 116)
- Governments may never sacrifice the individual to the collectivity because the individual is prior to civil society and society must be directed towards him or her. ([Mater et Magistra](#) 109; [Quadragesimo Anno](#), 26)
- Employers must pay wages which allow the worker to live in a "reasonable and frugal comfort" ([Rerum Novarum](#) 34) and wages may not simply be a question of what contract a worker will accept. Conversely, workers may not claim that the produce and profits which are not required to repair and replace invested capital belong by right to them ([Quadragesimo Anno](#) 55, 114) and they must negotiate their wages with the common good in mind. ([Quadragesimo Anno](#) 119; [Mater et Magistra](#) 112) As is the case with the employer, it is not just a question of what kind of contract can be extracted.
- Both the workers and the employers have an equal duty to be concerned for the common good. ([Laborem Exercens](#) 20)
- And, the condemnation of injustice is part of the ministry of evangelization and is an integral aspect of the Church's prophetic role. ([Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#) 42)

The church has history on its side in teaching these principles. The failure of Marxism in Eastern Europe highlights precisely that an attempt to create justice for everyone without sufficiently factoring in the place of private profit and private wealth (not to mention God or love) doesn't lead to prosperity and justice, just as our present economic crisis highlights that an unregulated profit motive doesn't lead to prosperity and justice either. There is a middle road, and the Church's social teachings are that road-map.

<http://liturgy.slu.edu/index.html>

(main site from which the Bible study is composed)