

Sunday Readings

27th January 2019

FIRST READING

A reading from the Book of Nehemiah 8:2-6. 8-10

Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, consisting of men, women, and children old enough to understand. This was the first day of the seventh month. On the square before the Water Gate, in the presence of the men and women, and children old enough to understand, he read from the book from early morning till noon; all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden dais erected for the purpose. In full view of all the people – since he stood higher than all the people – Ezra opened the book; and when he opened it all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, 'Amen! Amen!'; then they bowed down and, face to the ground, prostrated themselves before the Lord. And Ezra read from the Law of God, translating and giving the sense, so that the people understood what was read.

Then Nehemiah – His Excellency – and Ezra, priest and scribe and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people, 'This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not be mournful, do not weep.' For the people were all in tears as they listened to the words of the Law.

He then said, 'Go, eat the fat, drink the sweet wine, and send a portion to the man who has nothing prepared ready. For this day is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad: the joy of the Lord is your stronghold.'

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 18:8-10.15. R/. Jn 6:63.

R/. Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life.

The law of the Lord is perfect,
it revives the soul.

The rule of the Lord is to be trusted,
it gives wisdom to the simple. **R/.**

The precepts of the Lord are right,
they gladden the heart.

The command of the Lord is clear,
it gives light to the eyes. **R/.**

The fear of the Lord is holy,
abiding for ever.

The decrees of the Lord are truth
and all of them just. **R/.**

May the spoken words of my mouth,
the thoughts of my heart,
win favour in your sight, O Lord,
my rescuer, my rock! **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 12:12-30

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink. Nor is the body to be identified with any one of its many parts. If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the

body', would that mean that it stopped being part of the body? If the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body', would that mean that it was not a part of the body? If your whole body was just one eye, how would you hear anything? If it was just one ear, how would you smell anything?

Instead of that, God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you', nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you.'

What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones; and it is the least honourable parts of the body that we clothe with the greatest care. So our more improper parts get decorated in a way that our more proper parts do not need. God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and that there may not be disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it.

Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it. In the Church, God has given the first place to apostles, the second to prophets, the third to teachers; after them, miracles, and after them the gift of healing; helpers, good leaders, those with many languages. Are all of them apostles, or all of them prophets, or all of them teachers? Do they all have the gift of miracles, or all have the gift of healing? Do all speak strange languages, and all interpret them?

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

GOSPEL

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

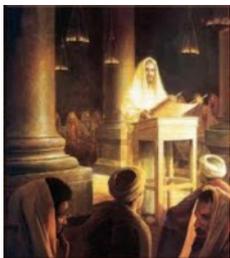
The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary Year C

The Word of God

Saint of the Week

Fulfilment, good news to the poor and liberation to captives, are the key words that capture the central theme of this Sunday readings. Both the Gospel and the first reading of this Sunday proclaim a message of liberation to the poor. In the first reading the Israelites have just returned from their long exile in Babylon, where they have been greatly humiliated, and so their spirits are down. They need a word of encouragement to help renew them spiritually, and offer them a strong motivation and renewal. Ezra the priest understands their situation, and uses the regular worship as a moment for spiritual recommitment as he reads from the Book of the Law of God. We are told that “all the people listened attentively”. The message seems to touch the audience deeply, and the people are ready to recommit themselves to their God, and to embark on a spiritual, moral and physical renewal of Jerusalem. Here we find a good pastoral example in the way the priest Ezra applies the Word of God in a concrete situation with great success in the spiritual renewal of the people. The responsorial psalm affirms this power of God’s Word. “Your words, Lord, are spirit and they are life”.



In the Gospel reading, Jesus like Ezra reads a Scripture passage in the Synagogue. The passage given to Jesus from Isaiah is a concrete fulfilment in his own person and ministry. He declares that “This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.” The passage is a summary of Jesus’

pastoral ministry that is already accomplished. Jesus is sent “to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free and to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour”. In blending this text from Isaiah with the words of Jesus at the end, Luke highlights the fact that indeed Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the prophets.

Prayer of the Week

A Prayer of St Thomas Aquinas

Grant me, O Lord my God,
a mind to know you,
a heart to seek you,
wisdom to find you,
conduct pleasing to you,
faithful perseverance in waiting for you,
and a hope of finally embracing you.
Amen.

Monday 28 January 2019

St Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)



He was born of a noble family in southern Italy, and was educated by the Benedictines. In the normal course of events he would have joined that order and taken up a position suitable to his rank; but he decided to become a Dominican instead. His family were so scandalised by this disreputable plan that they kidnapped him and

kept him prisoner for over a year; but he was more obstinate than they were, and he had his way at last.

He studied in Paris and in Cologne under the great philosopher St Albert the Great. It was a time of great philosophical ferment. The writings of Aristotle, the greatest philosopher of the ancient world, had been newly rediscovered, and were becoming available to people in the West for the first time in a thousand years. Many feared that Aristotelianism was flatly contradictory to Christianity, and the teaching of Aristotle was banned in many universities at this time – the fact that Aristotle’s works were coming to the West from mostly Muslim sources did nothing to help matters.

Into this chaos Thomas brought simple, straightforward sense. Truth cannot contradict truth: if Aristotle (the great, infallible pagan philosopher) appears to contradict Christianity (which we know by faith to be true), then either Aristotle is wrong or the contradiction is in fact illusory. And so Thomas studied, and taught, and argued, and eventually the simple, common-sense philosophy that he worked out brought an end to the controversy. Out of his work came many writings on philosophy and theology, including the *Summa Theologiae*, a standard textbook for many centuries and still an irreplaceable resource today. Out of his depth of learning came, also, the dazzling poetry of the liturgy for Corpus Christi. And out of his sanctity came the day when, celebrating Mass, he had a vision that, he said, made all his writings seem like so much straw; and he wrote no more.

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to inspire us, like St Thomas, to love God with our minds as well as our hearts.