

# Sunday Readings

## 26th January 2025

### FIRST READING

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

In those days: Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it, all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen,' lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Ezra and the Levites read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the meaning, so that the people understood the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, 'Go on your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'

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

Brothers and Sisters: Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honourable we bestow the greater honour, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the Church first Apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

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.*

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

At that time: Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll, and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And he rolled up the scroll, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

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

**F**ulfilment, 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.

**Tuesday 28 January 2025**

### 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.