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Commentary on the Gospel: The “Today” of Christ

Gospel for the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C), and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 1:1-4; Lk 4:14-21*)

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, 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 know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed...

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning 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 he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release

to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are
oppressed,

to proclaim the acceptable year of
the Lord.

And he closed the book, 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.”

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Commentary

This Sunday's liturgy presents
together two passages from Saint
Luke's Gospel. The first is the
preface, addressed to someone called

Theophilus – whose name is Greek for “friend of God.” Luke wants to write a well-documented, orderly account of Christ’s life “from the beginning,” explaining the salvific meaning of “the things which have been accomplished among us” (v. 1).

This Gospel is addressed, then, to everyone who truly wants to be a “friend of God.” By entering into its pages “like another person present there” as Saint Josemaría invited us to do, we will encounter the lovable figure of Jesus, and discover that the Scriptures are fulfilled in Him, and also that they are still being fulfilled today “among us.” “In that holy Writing you will find the Life of Jesus, but you should also find your own life” (*The Forge*, 754).

In the second passage, we are present with Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, the town where He grew up. He goes to the synagogue as on

every Sabbath, to pray and listen to God's Word. He must have learned to do so very naturally, by going there as a young Child with Joseph and Mary.

Luke's account introduces us into the scene at the synagogue. After prayers are said, a passage from the Pentateuch or Torah – God's Law – is read, and then a passage from one of the Prophets that illustrates the meaning of what the Law teaches. The presider in the synagogue invites one of those present to read, or someone with sufficient knowledge stands up voluntarily to read and then explain the meaning of God's Word.

On this occasion Jesus stands up. He find in the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah that is offered Him the part where Isaiah speaks of one anointed by the Lord who brings the good news of salvation and the

announcement that God will free his people from their afflictions. These consoling words were addressed to the people of Judah who had been striving to rebuild their land after many decades of ruin and collapse, following the conquest of their territory by the Babylonian army at the beginning of the 6th century BC. Those who eventually returned from the Babylonian exile were experiencing their own inadequacy to remedy all the material and moral harm that had been done. But God would fulfil his promises of salvation. What Jesus reads aloud in the synagogue is not just a reminder of a hope-filled announcement from God that came true in the past; it is the announcement of what is actually happening in their midst, as Jesus himself tells them: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (*Lk 4:21*). Jesus is the Redeemer who has been promised.

This “today” that Jesus speaks about in the Gospel is not just a day that went by more than twenty centuries ago. Jesus is also speaking to each of us “today,” here and now in the 21st century, because now too Christ, the “anointed of the Lord” (the *Messiah*, the Hebrew word for “anointed one”), is alive and wants to heal our sufferings, weaknesses and sins. Today can truly be, for each and every one of us, a day of salvation. So let us not put off till tomorrow the decision that our Lord is hoping we will make “today”: our conversion, forgiving and accepting forgiveness, beginning again with the help of God’s grace, our complete self-giving.... The old adage “*Carpe diem*” (“Seize the day!”) has a message for us too. We need to make the most of “today,” when God comes to us, to heal us and make us truly happy.

Today God wants to rely on our “Yes!” to continue bringing about the salvation achieved by Jesus for all mankind, both for ourselves and for us to bring to everyone. “This is also our mission: to be anointed by the Spirit, and to go out to our brothers and sisters in order to proclaim the Word and to be for them a means of salvation” (Pope Francis, Message for the 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations).

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