

HOMILY ON THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – JANUARY 26, 2025



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. [Luke 4:14–15](#)

This Gospel passage reveals to us the very beginnings of Jesus’ public ministry. He had been baptized. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of God, had descended on him. He fled into the desert, tempted to think of himself, to give up, or not even to start. He did not give in. He came out of the desert. He picked some company and went to that wedding feast in Cana to indicate where the foundation of human life lies. When passing through Cana, he must, according to Luke, have been on his way to his hometown, Nazareth.

His fame had been spreading, and on that first sabbath day in Nazareth, everyone who could move in that town went to the synagogue. They were curious, and they definitely expected him there, because - as Luke wrote “it had been his custom to be there on the sabbath day” when the leader of the service asked for a reader, they all remained very determinedly seated. No one stood up. They wanted him to stand up and take the reading. That is what he did.

He stood up. They handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He accepted their choice. He took the scroll. he rolled it down- a hush went through all the building, all eyes were now on him, and he read: the spirit of the lord had been given to me, for he has anointed me. He had 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 favor. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant, and sat down. Another hush went through the building. Only teachers with authority sat down while speaking. He said: this text is being fulfilled today, even as you listen. The time has come!

Though Jesus was initially welcomed with praise, we know that things quickly changed. Some eventually became so hostile that they put Jesus to death, but it’s useful to ponder the initial response He received. This initial response is one that must become continuously new in our lives. The initial response was that He “was praised by all.”

Jesus would later teach about this initial experience many would have toward the Gospel when He taught the Parable of the Sower. Recall that the seed that was sown on rocky ground, that fell among thorns, and that was sown in good soil all began to grow. Only that which was sown on the path failed to grow, because the birds came and ate it up. This latter case describes those who are completely indifferent to the Gospel. But in today’s Gospel, the “all” are those who at least paid attention and initially responded with enthusiasm. The seed began to grow in these three scenarios—but, of course, in only one of those cases did the seed ultimately bear good fruit.

Another way to look at this initial encounter with the Gospel is to consider a child. In almost every case, when a child is presented with the Gospel, they will begin to respond and even find excitement in the faith. But, as many parents have seen, this initial welcome is sometimes followed by a rejection of the Gospel later in life.

When did you initially encounter the Gospel? For some it was during childhood. For others, there was a powerful experience of conversion later in life. Think of that initial encounter you had and the ways that you were excited by your newfound faith. Has that experience continued and grown in your life? Or has your initial praise of God and enthusiasm dwindled or even died?

Let us not forget that it is we, too, who are baptized in him, washed and converted, filled with the spirit of God, the spirit of Jesus Christ.

It is clear from the text read by Jesus in Nazareth what the spirit should do in us. He should do in us what he did in Jesus: bring good news to the poor, liberate captives, give sight to the blind, uplift the exploited, and proclaim God's grace.

It means that wherever we find any human being not fully living up to her or his human dignity, that wherever we find a fellow human being dehumanized, we should help that sister or brother be fulfilled, whatever the reason for the dehumanization might have been: psychological, spiritual, physical, medical, economic, or cultural.

Reflect, today, upon the fact that God wants us to continuously experience the Gospel as something new and transforming. The newness of the life of grace must never wear off. Ponder this experience in your life and try to see yourself as one of the people in today's Gospel who heard Jesus for the first time. Ponder their enthusiasm and join in their praise of our Lord so that you will be motivated to let God, and the preaching of His holy Word continuously transform you. Amen.

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