



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 27th January 2019

In England and Wales –

Cycle of Prayer: Christian Unity

Keynote: Good News proclaimed to the Poor

Prophet Nehemiah 8: 2-6, 8-10

'In the presence of the old men and women, and children old enough to understand and to have it proclaimed to them by the prophet, 'from early morning until noon; all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law...' One of a number of occasions recorded in the Old Testament when the people assemble to hear the word of God and the reading of the Law. The reading provokes tears, for the people realise that they have been unfaithful to the Law, they've failed to keep the Sabbath holy, failed to share their food with the poor or failed the stranger in their midst. The prophet encourages them, *'Go eat the fat, drink the sweet wine and send a portion to the man who has nothing... do not be sad, for this day is sacred to the Lord.'* Today, we too may wish to reflect on our fidelity in God's service, on what we have done with the riches and blessings given us, and how we have served the needy, the poor, or the refugee in our land, and what quality time we have set aside to God.

Responsorial Psalm 18 (19) – A song in praise of God's Law

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 12: 12–30

The very diversity of the human body, with its many parts, is rooted in unity and as each part of the body needs the other to survive, the body also illustrates the co-responsibility within the Church for its members. In the Christian assembly, the different members all share a common existence in Christ. *'So, it is with Christ'*, writes Paul, *'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.'* We need constantly to rediscover the fundamental unity we have in Christ.

Gospel according to Luke 1: 1-4; 4: 14-21

Luke, the evangelist tells us why he wrote the gospel. It is worth careful study. He then introduces Jesus in the synagogue as the 'Teacher'. Just as in the first reading the prophet stood before the people to proclaim God's law and to explain the meaning of the scriptures – so Jesus now stands in the midst of the assembly to proclaim the scriptures. Quoting from the ancient text of Isaiah, Jesus says, *'The spirit of the Lord has been given to me... to bring the Good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to the blind new sight... to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.'* Then, sitting down Jesus began to speak to them, *'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.'* Jesus the Teacher speaks as one with authority. We can hear the very voice and words of the Lord reaching down the ages to our ears today. What we hear is good news, both for us and for our time. Here is our opportunity to say 'Yes, Lord' and to respond to Jesus by our manner of living and the service we give others – to see, even in our own lives, *'this text is being fulfilled today even as you listen... The spirit of the Lord has been given to me... to bring the Good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to the blind new sight... to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.'* That is why Luke the evangelist wrote his *'ordered account of the events that have taken place among us... so that you may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received.'*

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