

livingtheword

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Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

Reading I

[Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10](#)

Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, which consisted of men, women, and those children old enough to understand. Standing at one end of the open place that was before the Water Gate, he read out of the book from daybreak till midday, in the presence of the men, the women, and those children old enough to understand; and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law.

Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. He opened the scroll so that all the people might see it — for he was standing higher up than any of the people; and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, “Amen, amen!” Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground.

Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read. Then Nehemiah, that is, His Excellency, and Ezra the priest-scribe and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people: “Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep” — for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. He said further: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!”

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15](#)

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul;

The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;

The ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart

find favor before you,

O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

Reading II

[1 Cor 12:12-30 or 12:12-14, 27](#)

Brothers and sisters:

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. You are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

Gospel

[Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21](#)

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

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.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to
captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the
Lord.*

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Reflection Questions

- Reading the passages slowly and reflectively, what word, phrase or idea strikes you in the readings? (circle or underline them)
- What do you think God is trying to say to you personally through these words?
- In the first reading the People of God were returning from exile in Babylon. They were a band of zealous religious refugees returning home. Nehemiah was their leader helping the community to rebuild the wall around the city of Jerusalem. Ezra was their priest leading the community in listening to the 'laws' of God. Ezra is known for strict adherence to the laws of Moses and not allowing intermarriage. The people cry because they hear the law and have it interpreted for them so that they understand. Is there an area of the Church's teaching which you may need to hear and have interpreted for you? What is it? Who could you ask for help? Why do you think Ezra tells them to eat and drink?
- St Paul continues teaching the community about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some of the community thought they were 'better' than others because they had the gift of tongues. St Paul teaches the gifts of the spirit serve the community and help it to truly be the 'body' of Christ in the world. Do you feel your gifting for serving the Church is in the head (teaching), heart (caring), hands (serving), feet (missionary) of the Church? How could you share your gifting this week? This year?
- In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus begins his 'public' ministry to the most difficult group - his hometown! Jesus is clear and bold in his vision. Do you have a clear sense of mission and purpose in your life and service of God? Jesus uses 50 words, what would you write in 50 words for your personal mission statement as you begin the year?
- The 'year acceptable to the Lord' is the 50th year (the Jubilee Year as established in Leviticus 25). Debts were cancelled, prisoners and slaves freed, land was returned to its original family ownership. The whole financial, social and political structure was renewed. The Jewish people called this the 'Tikkan Olam' meaning 'the repair of the world'. Repairing the world is an essential part of the work of the Church and every follower of Jesus. Do I consider 'healing the world' as part of my consciousness as a follower of Jesus? What area of need in the world 'attracts me' -calls out to me?
- What is one action that you will do to 'livetheword' this week?