

Our Lady of Lourdes

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

January 24, 2010

Readings:

Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

1st Corinthians 12:12-30

Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Fr. Bob

This year, in Ordinary Time, we'll be hearing from the Gospel of Luke. Today, we hear the beginning, the prologue, that is addressed to Theophilus. And in the beginning of the Gospel, Luke gets right to the point. At the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, Luke summarizes the story he is about to tell Theophilus and his community in no uncertain terms who Jesus was. And we should note, especially today, where the prime focus of Jesus' ministry would be. In the tradition of the greatest of the prophets, we are told Jesus has come for those of us who are poor, captive, blind and oppressed. But, unlike the former prophets, Jesus is not only a companion in our distress or an advocate on our behalf, he has also come to turn the world upside down and establish the definitive reign of God in our lives. In Jesus, all that Israel longed to see is fulfilled. And so to us, as the spiritual children of Jesus, Luke, Theophilus and his community, we are inheritors of a tradition that is upfront in what we are called to do. Our call is explicit. We are called to be companions to the poor, to set prisoners free, to fight oppression, to enable others to confront what they would prefer to ignore and to boldly proclaim that there is no one beyond God's favor. Again, there is no one, in the eyes of Christ, that is beyond the favor of God.

And in, perhaps, the shortest sermon of Christ's career, he says simply, to the words of Isaiah, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your presence". As tough as these demands are, they are not optional extras. They define who we are as Christians and how we are sent to change the world. As Paul's reading points out, this is to be

accomplished, not by a few people, not by just the apostles. It is to be done by the entire body of Christ, the entire body of believers. Within this body, the full burden does not fall on one person. It is something that is spread out in our entire membership. In Paul's image of the body, very familiar to last week's lesson on the gifts of the Spirit, we all have our call, we all have our own responsibility, we all have, if you will, our own area, where we do our part to bring about the kingdom of God in serving the poor, the marginalized, those in need. For as long as there is poverty, as long as there are those who are left out, as long as people go without, and as long as people are in need, then the peace of Christ, and the coming of his kingdom are delayed. The people's hope of the coming of the Messiah was fulfilled by the coming of Christ and he left no doubt as to his mission. But his mission is incomplete. He has chosen to act through this body of Christ, in all our many different ways of reacting, to work toward his goal, with his help, to fulfill what has been an ancient promise. For each of us, we must discover what part it is that we play in bringing about Jesus' promise and in what way we reach out to the same people that Jesus promised to touch. As individuals we cannot do it all, but if all do their part, then the kingdom will come.