

COMMENTARY

3rd Sunday OT:C

Resources:

- Wansbrough, H. (2012). The Sunday Word: A Commentary on the Sunday Readings (p. 235). London; New York: Burns & Oates.
- Navarre Bible.
- Scott Hahn.

Readings:

1st Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

“Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month.

³ He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁴ The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose.

⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

⁸ So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

The book of Nehemiah describes “the re-establishment of the People of Israel, now the Jews, in and around Jerusalem, on their release from exile in Babylon” (Wansbrough).

“Whereas religious activity from the time of Solomon up to the fall of Jerusalem centred on the temple liturgy, from the exile onwards it was built around the Law by means of the institution of the synagogue... The reading of the books of the Law will from now on become the most important way of meeting God and listening to his word” (Navarre Bible).

“The meaning of today’s Liturgy is subtle and many-layered. We need background to understand what’s happening in today’s First Reading. Babylon having been defeated, King Cyrus of Persia decreed that the exiled Jews could return home to Jerusalem. They rebuilt their ruined temple (see Ezra 6:15-17) and under Nehemiah finished rebuilding the city walls (see Nehemiah 6:15). The stage was set for the renewal of the covenant and the re-establishment of the Law of Moses as the people’s rule of life. That’s what’s going on in today’s First Reading, as Ezra reads and interprets (see Nehemiah 8:8) the Law and the people respond with a great “Amen!”... We witness in today’s Liturgy the creation of a new people of God. Ezra started reading at dawn of the first day of the Jewish new year (see Leviticus 23:24). Jesus too proclaims a “sabbath,” a great

year of Jubilee, a deliverance from slavery to sin, a release from the debts we owe to God (see Leviticus 25:10).” – Scott Hahn

“In this scene, Ezra reads out and so promulgates the Law in Jerusalem, to the acclaim of the people. What a contrast to the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth where Jesus reads out the passage from Isaiah that is the clue to his way of life and that of his followers, only to be rejected by his own people!” (Wansbrough).

Responsorial Psalm: 19:8-10,15

R. “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63c)

“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul... rejoicing the heart... enlightening the eyes”

“Israel, as we sing in today’s Psalm, is rededicating itself to God and His Law. The scene seems like the Isaiah prophecy that Jesus reads from in today’s Gospel.” – Scott Hahn

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Following directly on last Sunday’s reading, in today’s passage, Paul shows just why the different gifts of the Spirit must be used for the common purpose of building up the community.

“The people greeted Ezra “as one man.” And, as today’s Epistle teaches, in the Spirit the new people of God – the Church – is made “one body” with Him.” – Scott Hahn

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

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

**¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,**

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Today's gospel passage starts the series of readings from Luke that will continue throughout the ordinary Sundays of the Year. It is composed of two separate passages: first, it gives Luke's introduction to his gospel, in which he explains how and why he wrote it. Then, jumping over the preparatory stories of Jesus' infancy, baptism and testing in the desert, it comes directly to his programmatic manifesto in the synagogue at Nazareth.