

Thursday after Epiphany

Gospel text (Lk 4:14-22): 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.” And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me”

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Today, we remember that “whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1Jn 4:21). How can we love God, whom we do not see, when we do not love our brother who is made in God's image?

After Saint Peter had disowned Him three times, Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him: “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (Jn 21:17), he said. Jesus also asks us, as He did with Saint Peter: “Do you love me?, and we want to answer: —Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you despite my weaknesses; but let me prove it to you, help me discover my brothers' needs, to truly give myself to the needy and neglected, to accept them as they are, to value them.

Love is first man's calling. The Lord calls us to give ourselves to bring true happiness to others. As Saint John of the Cross says, "at the evening of our day we shall be judged by our loving." At the evening of each day, it is appropriate that we pause to examine ourselves to determine how we expressed our love, focusing on those aspects that we need to improve to make our loving an even greater blessing to others.

In His messianic proclamation Jesus said “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me” (Lk 4:18). It is the Spirit of Love that “anointed the Messiah to bring good news to the poor” (cf. Lk 4:18), who also “rests” upon us and guides us towards perfect love: as the Second Vatican Council points out, “all the faithful ones, of any estate or condition, are welcome to the plenitude of Christian life and the perfection of Charity”. If we allow it, the Holy Spirit will transform us just as He changed the Apostles, so that we can act under His influence, even as He grants us His blessings, bringing them to all our hearts, as Saint Paul wrote: “In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Our Savior having in very truth become Man, the salvation of the whole man was brought about. But truly our salvation is not merely apparent, nor does it extend to the body only, but the whole man has truly obtained salvation in the Word Himself.” (Saint Athanasius)
- “There are many Christians with a watered down hope. To be Christian victors we must believe by confessing the faith, and also keeping watch over our faith, and trusting in God, in the Lord. And this is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith.” (Francis)
- “We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel, (...) is the eternal Son of God made man. He ‘came from God’ (Jn 13:3), ‘descended from heaven’ (Jn 3:13; 6:33) and ‘came in the flesh’ (1 Jn 4:2) (...). ‘From his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace’ (Jn 1:14,16).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 423)