

## Homily-3rd Sunday of the Year C

Beloved in Christ, a few of weeks ago, we celebrated the feast of the Baptism of Jesus Christ. In our homily at that occasion, we explained that the baptism Jesus received “transcended the baptism John the Baptist administered”. The Trinitarian manifestation – the voice of the Father, the Son being baptized, and the Holy Spirit descending in bodily form like a dove – happened for the first time ever. It marked the beginning of a new dispensation. It was the Trinitarian endorsement and commissioning of Jesus in Spirit and power. It is the anointing for mission.

Shortly after this, Jesus goes to the temple and proclaims a new era: “*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*”. We must pay attention to the words spoken by Christ, after reading the above passage from the Book of Isaiah, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” These words reveal that this passage only attained its fulfillment in Christ. Although God’s spirit had worked and inspired the prophets of God in the past, none of them could fulfill this mission and vocation.

Beloved, what I want to underline is that it is precisely in the context of a liturgical celebration that Jesus declares that this prophesy is fulfilled. Why is this significant? Often times, we hear people who, in the words of Pope Paul VI, “whom we wish to believe are well-intentioned but who are certainly misguided in their attitude” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 16), repudiating liturgical worship. They erroneously claim that we do not need the order of Mass or any arranged structure of worship; they mock our community written prayers, the altars, lectors, servers, incense, hierarchy, chalice, etc. For them, Jesus said, “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Therefore, they reject hierarchy, structures and order of worship. What a terrible misunderstanding!

Beloved, we can easily see the absurdity of such misunderstandings from today’s celebration. Today, Jesus fulfills the Scripture in a liturgical context, in the context of the public worship of God by the community. Pay attention to the structure we see in the First Reading ([Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10](#)) and the Gospel ([Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21](#)): Both were in a strictly liturgical context, having hierarchy, structures, and order of worship: they were done on the Sabbath (a day stipulated by God); there were ministers and servers; there were congregations; Ezra the priest and Jesus read from the Scriptures; they preached from the Scriptures (homily); the people responded to the readings and worshipped with different gestures: stood up, “bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground”. This is the liturgical assembly worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

It is within the liturgical worship that our identity and work of evangelization stands out in the fullest sense. Concerning the Eucharist (the Liturgy itself), St. Paul says, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1Cor 11:26). For Christians, our Sabbath is Sunday – the First Day of the Week (cf. Acts 20:7f). Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his followers on this day (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Hence, it is called “the day of the Lord” (Rev 1:10). Indeed, “today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!” Even our stewardship of treasure on Sundays dates to the apostles: “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come” (1Cor 16:2).

We are a liturgical people whose primary purpose is the worship of God and evangelization. God’s plan is “to make us a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:5). Christ is the one who leads us in the worship of God in spirit and truth in the liturgical assembly. In him, we have become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart”. Hence, this community is identified in our Second Reading (1Cor 12:12-30) today as “The Body of Christ” in which all must work in harmony: “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....”

Finally, the Spirit has endowed the Church with both hierarchical (clergy) and charismatic gifts (ministries – clerical and lay) for evangelization. There are “first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues....” Notice the zeal through which St. Luke evangelized: the entire gospel of Luke was dedicated to evangelizing one person, *most excellent Theophilus*. What a commitment! May God give us the grace to fulfill our calling just as Christ did in his ministry, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.