

3rd Sunday OT – Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

The evangelist Luke puts the start of the *public teaching of Jesus* in the dramatic setting of the synagogue at Nazareth. Note that our first reading from Nehemiah, the scribe Ezra did much to encourage *reading the Mosaic Law* which enabled Israel to survive as a people after the return from exile in Babylon.

Instead of speaking of the kingdom of God, as in Mark and Matthew, Jesus adapts words from the prophet Isaiah. His mention of *the Spirit* reminds the reader of Jesus' baptism. His program of preaching the Good News to the poor prepares the reader for the mission of Jesus and of his witnesses who will continue his work in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

The poor in this Gospel are those in genuine need, whether it is lack of material resources, physical blindness or social distress. Jesus' program goes beyond that of the Baptist and gives an example to those who follow him of inviting to his banquet "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

Jesus challenged his hearers to recognize their *today*. They could either accept or reject the opportunity presented by his presence and message. If they followed the example of the shepherds at his birth, of Zacchaeus up his tree as he came into Jericho, of the good Thief as he was dying on the cross, they would find salvation.

Carmen Nanko-Fernandez writes in **Catholic Women Preach**, "Jesus returns to the barrio of his youth and reminds the assembled of what he has learned from the heart of his pueblo. The ancient wisdom that he was raised in, *is his*, and there, in the company of his townspeople, he has come home to demonstrate that he has learned well. He claims for himself the familiar words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The Spirit of God is upon me.'

"Anointed by the Spirit, however, comes with responsibilities. Such anoint demands the work of justice, freeing captives, liberating the oppressed, bringing good news to the poor. But Luke's Jesus reminds us—a few verses later---that such work is risky business because "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in their own hometown."

What impressed me with her commentary was the following: "For too long we have domesticated the Holy Spirit, imagining a peaceful white dove as a comforter to support the status quo, or as an advocate without the sharp edge

of advocacy. We prefer a Spirit less persistent, less irritating, less demanding than the one that gets Jesus run out of his own hometown. We do not appreciate a ***dis-comforter*** who shakes us out of our comfort zones, who finds in our diversity new ways to make common cause. We avoid a Spirit who vexes and cajoles us to be prophetic advocates collaboratively with those of us and among us who are pushing to the margins in Church and society, family and nation. The incarnation of the Spirit is not best represented by *a white dove*; it is more like the ubiquitous *urban pigeon*—disruptive, discomfoting, irritating.”