

PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL & ST SIMON STOCK, CARMELITE CHURCH
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3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time C – 23rd January 2022

Listening to the Word of God

The second part of our Gospel today contains a text from Isaiah 61:1-2 read out by Jesus during a sabbath liturgy in the synagogue of Nazareth. The Jewish synagogue worship would usually consist of prayers, readings from Torah (that is the first 5 books of the bible) and the Prophets, and a sermon. It was customary for the leader of the service to stand while praying or reading, but stand while teaching or preaching. And any person who is lettered could be invited to stand up and read. This is the likely scenario in the synagogue when Jesus read the text of Isaiah.

But this text from Isaiah was not a random choice by Jesus. The list of readings for the first lesson was probably set, but there was freedom to choose any text from the Prophets for the second reading. Jesus deliberately chose the text from Isaiah to provide listeners from his hometown with a manifesto for his ministry. After the reading he gave a short homily which has been abbreviated in the Gospel. His homily was about the fulfilment of the prophecy from Isaiah which he had just read. He remarked that the things the prophet foretold centuries before was now being fulfilled: "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen." This initially filled them with amazement, but it later turned to hostility when they realized that Jesus was referring to himself. They could not contain the possibility that one of their own, known locally as Joseph's (or the carpenter's) son, would be the Messiah foretold by the prophets.

Looking closely at the manifesto presented by Jesus, we see the emphasis on the role of the Spirit. It is with the Spirit that Jesus was anointed or we can even say that it is the Spirit that anointed Jesus and sent him out on a mission to reverse the misfortunes of the unfortunate in Israel:

*To bring the good news to the poor,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And to the blind new sight,
To set the downtrodden free,
To proclaim the Lord's year of favour.*

Jesus would carry out these works through the power of the Spirit. We know that this power came into effect through Jesus' words by which he healed all sorts diseases.

In effect, there is a connection between word and Spirit. The Psalmist tells us, "Your words are Spirit, Lord, and they are life." Listening to the word of God is listening to the Spirit of God. Just as we discern the Spirit, so must we discern the word. This Sunday has been tagged the 'Sunday of the Word of God' and we are invited to pay special attention to the word we hear. How do we listen when we hear the word of God?

Listening is an intentional activity distinguishable from mere hearing which is passive and involuntary. Listening to the word of God requires an openness to the Spirit that is communicated through the word, the Spirit which is life; the Spirit that liberates the poor, the captives and the downtrodden. It is possible to hear and not listen. This is probably the case with Jesus' audience

who would not accept him as the Messiah simply because he was one of their own, because he was just the carpenter's son. They could see no more than that. If our prejudices interfere with the word of God, we stop listening, we pass judgment on the word. And consequently we reject the Spirit of God and the power that the word transmits.

Lord, help us to truly listen to your word. For your words are Spirit and they are life.

NOTICES

RCIA

Candidates wishing to become Catholics either from other Christian denominations or by being baptised first time can contact the parish through our email address or speak to one of the priests.

Recruitment for Altar servers

Anyone between the age of 8-22 who would like to serve during Sunday Masses may contact parish reception to declare their interest. Training will be organised from 1st February.

Blessed Marie Eugene Group

On 4th and 5th February, this group will be celebrating the Centenary of the Ordination and entry into Carmel of Blessed Marie Eugene. At 6pm on the 4th, there will be a Mass followed by veneration of his relics. On 5th, there will be a series of talks from 2.00pm – 6.00pm with a small concert between the talks. Please see the poster on the notice board for more details or contact Monique Varenne: monivarenne@yahoo.fr for further enquiries.

COVID – Remaining Cautious

We are glad to hear that COVID infection rate is going down and government restrictions have been eased further. We will soon reduce our social distancing in the church. However we must continue to be cautious and continue to follow the guidance set out for this church:

- If you have any symptoms of cold or covid-19 you are advised to stay at home and not travel to the church
- Please continue to wear a face covering while in the Church
- Use the hand sanitizers at the entrance to the church and please continue to keep a safe distance at all times.

News from Caritas Westminster

There are some activities lined up for February and March for those interested in volunteering and those working with older people and homeless people. Please see our website for further details.

Collections Last Sunday

Offering	£1039
Gift Aid Envelopes	£82

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus, OCD