

### **3RD SUNDAY ORD. (C) YOUR WORDS, OH LORD, ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE**

The Eucharist we celebrate every day is a commemoration of our redemption by Christ. It is like the celebration of the Israelites after their return from exile. It is a meeting of all different parts of the body of Christ coming together to give thanks to God through His Son. The Eucharist consists of two important parts; the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word, made up of the penitential rite and the readings, among others, helps us to prepare ourselves to move to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Psalm sung today tells us how important the word of God is. When the Israelites returned from exile Ezra the priest and scribe, and Nehemiah the governor, found the book of the Law and they read it to the people. It was a time for the renewal of the covenant and the reestablishment of the Law of Moses as the people's rule of life. The way the message was presented, and the actions and the response from the people, indicated the importance of the Law of the Lord to them. They showed reverence to the word, by standing up when the book was opened, and then bowing down their heads to worship God. Thus, the reading was preceded by prayer and worship. The people were touched by the word so much that they began to weep.

They remembered how they and their fathers had broken the law of God and the dire consequences they had experienced. They were overwhelmed by a sense of their own shortcomings with respect to the Law and by the threat of curses with such failure. Ezra and Nehemiah encouraged them that, instead of lamenting, they should rejoice and enjoy their meals after which portions of the food were sent to those who had nothing to eat.

In the gospel, we heard about Jesus reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and He made it clear that what was written some years back was about Him. He was the Word-Made-Flesh, and the word is to bring good tidings, freedom and hope to the poor and the captives. The way St. Luke began his gospel, is to remind us that the message about Christ is not a story, but an event which actually took place, and it is credible. He addressed Theophilus, (a name which means 'friend of God') letting him know the dependability of the things about which he had been informed, or what he had heard about. He was assuring him that all the things he had

heard about Christ were all true, because there were eyewitnesses to them.

The Psalmist tells us today how important the Law of the Lord is, and what it does for us: “The Law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul; the decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart”. The Psalmist at another time said; “Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path,” (Ps.119:105).

The words of the Lord are spirit and life, and that was evident in the life of the Israelites, and proved by the life and actions of Jesus. But how is this manifested in our lives as Catholics? How important is the word of God in our daily lives? Do we know that it will refresh our soul and give us wisdom?

The Israelites showed great reverence to the word of God being read to them; in what way do we also show such reverence when it is read to us every day, and when we ourselves read it? Through the word, we have all become one body of Christ. As Ezra was a priest and scribe, Nehemiah the governor, and there were Levites who helped the people to understand the law, so also God has made some people in the Church, apostles, prophets, teachers, and those who perform mighty deeds. This is to bring all of us together to live in peace and harmony and support one another. This is to remind us how one we are when we come to celebrate the Eucharist, that I am the hand and you are the feet.

It is unfortunate that the Bible is the last book many Catholics will buy or read. It is the book most covered with dust on our shelves, even if we have it. We have forgotten about how important it is for us as Christians. St. Paul told Timothy: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work,” (2Tim.3:16-17).