

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C**  
**MARY, STAR OF THE SEA PARISH, PORT TOWNSEND, WA**  
**JANUARY 22/23, 2022 (FR. EMMANUEL)**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1In our First Reading today (Neh. 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10), we are told that Ezra the scribe and priest of God, read a portion of the Law of God to the people of Judah, and he, together with Nehemiah the Governor, interpreted the Law to encourage the people to celebrate and rejoice in the Lord.

2Historically speaking, about 100 years before this event took place, King Cyrus of Persia had defeated the Babylonians and allowed the Jews exiled in Babylon since 587/6 BC to return to their homeland to rebuild their lives and their Temple and to worship their God. Unfortunately, when the Jews returned, they could not do much in terms of this rebuilding because the work before them was so enormous while the resources they needed to do it was very little. Besides, they were also faced with the constant opposition of the Samaritans and the “people of the land”. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, the Governor and Ezra the priest and scribe, they organized the people and led them to work together to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem and the city walls. With this achieved, Ezra and Nehemiah now gathered the “whole people” together – men, women and children – and read the Law of God to them. As our First Reading tells us, they interpreted God’s Law to encourage the people to have hope and celebrate the Day of the Lord always as a holy day, a day of rejoicing. Their reading and interpretation of the Law of God was also to help the people to restore their covenant-relationship with God. The First Reading tells us that the people received the message with reverence and responded to it by weeping in recognition that the time was ripe for them to repair their broken relationships with God and with one another. It was time for them to begin to live once again as God’s own chosen people.

*Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

3From our First Reading today, there are three important lessons that I would like to share with you. *One, the Reading reminds us that God's Word is very important if we are to deepen our relationship with God.* We must read God's Word to know God's will and what He wants us to do. Reading God's Word will help us to deepen our faith in Him. Let us read our Bibles daily.

4*Two, the Reading reminds us that God's Word is intended to bring us peace, joy and happiness, not sorrow or sadness.* When the Jews heard God's Word, they began to weep but Ezra and Nehemiah urged them not to weep on account of God's Word but rejoice and be happy. God's Word is a source of consolation, encouragement and comfort. When we are down, let us take God's Word to read it; it will lift us up. When we need encouragement, God's Word will encourage us.

5*Three, understanding the Word of God means acting upon it.* God's Word must always lead us to act. It must break the sin within us, lead us to establish good relationship with God and with others and do what is right at all times. We must act upon the Word of God whenever we hear it.

6The **Gospel Reading** from *Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21*, is often called "The Nazareth Manifesto". This is because Jesus gives the manifesto, the outline of his earthly ministry, namely, to bring glad tidings to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind, and healing to the sick. What the Gospel Reading teaches us is that the salvation that Jesus brings is total; it touches every aspect of human life. Economically, he brings good news to the poor; politically, he brings freedom to captives, physically, he brings healing to the sick, and spiritually, forgiveness to sinners. The Gospel teaches us that Jesus is our Saviour and that there is no aspect of our lives that he cannot touch to save us.

7Today, let us allow God's Word to speak to our hearts to bring us joy. Let us allow Christ to heal us and save us. May God bless us now and always as we listen to His Word and act upon it daily.