

### Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – 01-23-2022

In the first reading Ezra the priest was standing in the middle of the assembly. He proclaimed that the day was holy to the Lord and that the people should rejoice.

In the gospel today, similar to the first reading, Jesus, the eternal high priest, stood in the midst of the assembly, opened the scroll and read it to the people.

Here is what he read: “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.” And then he said, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Ezra the priest was not the fulfillment of the law he had declared. Only Jesus, the eternal high priest and the Son of God, is the fulfillment of the law. So what does fulfillment of the law mean?

As Christians we are not simply united under a common moral law that binds us like slaves. We are meant to be united as individual members of the body of Christ.

The moral code that we live under as Catholics **is** important and the degree to which we adhere to it demonstrates our unity but it's not what ultimately binds us.

What binds us and enables us to live according to this moral code is our full incorporation into the body of Christ.

And the more perfectly we imitate Christ the more spontaneously we will live the Christian life according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

And there is no greater act that fulfills our incorporation into his Body than the worthy reception of Holy Communion at Mass.

When we approach the altar and the priest says, “The Body of Christ” and we respond “Amen” we are not simply saying “yes I believe that it is truly the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.” We are actually saying yes to everything that the Church teaches with regards to faith and morals.

This is why Catholics who do not fully accept Church teaching are not in full communion with the Church and they should refrain from the reception of Holy Communion until they have a change of heart and mind and can be reconciled in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This is also why those who are not yet fully received into the Catholic Church must refrain from receiving Holy Communion as well – they don’t really know what the Church teaches so they can’t possibly be in full communion.

Ironically though, there are Protestant’s sitting in pews at their local churches who are more in communion with the Catholic

Church than are some Catholics who pick and choose what they are going to believe and not believe.

Remember every properly baptized person, no matter what denomination they have been baptized into, is a member of the Catholic Church – they just aren't in full communion yet.

The Church truly desires everyone to receive Holy Communion and does not wish to exclude anyone but she does want to protect everyone's word.

In the old days a man's word was his bond. In order to make a deal it was sufficient to say so and shake on it. There was no need of a bunch of paperwork. Their word was their bond.

Jesus is the Word of the Father, Truth Incarnate, the Word made flesh, and when we give him our word at the moment of Holy Communion it should be as perfect and as truthful as possible.

Today, as we approach the altar of sacrifice to receive the Most Holy Eucharist, let's examine ourselves to make sure that we are giving ourselves completely to Jesus and his Church so that our word corresponds as much as is possible to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.

Like those who came before us, let's make our word our bond also!