



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 26, 2025
Sister Susan Quaintance

Neh 8: 2-4a, 5-6, 8-10
Ps 19: 8,9,10,15
1Cor 12: 12-30
Lk 1: 1-4 and 4: 14-21

If you know me at all – and this crowd, just like the one in Nazareth, listening to Jesus in the synagogue – knows me well, you might anticipate that I’m going to be excited about Sunday scriptures that are about words and language. And these (at least the first and third) are... so I’m pretty excited. But, while that’s nice for me, it’s not the important part. Luke’s Jesus is highlighting words that are really important to him, ones that are a bit of a mission statement at the beginning of his public ministry. They can be the same for us.

Luke does something really interesting in this gospel passage. As we hear, Jesus opens the scroll to Isaiah’s prophecy in order to read the weekly portion from the Prophets. What Luke puts in Jesus’s mouth, though, isn’t exactly what I find when I go to Isaiah. It’s Isaiah 61:1-4 woven together with 58:6, but with some omissions. What’s left out? That which might limit the focus of salvation or tempt the hearer to spiritualize what could be hard to hear. Luke is clear about those for whom Jesus has been sent: the poor, the captive, the oppressed.

There’s something else going on, too. Phrases like “good news to the poor,” “proclaim liberty to the captives,” and a “year acceptable to the Lord” are meant to remind those hearing this for the first time – as well as those of us millennia later – of the biblical concept of the Jubilee Year. This year of letting fields lay fallow, freeing slaves, canceling debts, and going home is a cause for rejoicing and a reminder of what the Kingdom of God is supposed to be like.

We know that Pope Francis has declared 2025 a Jubilee Year, but I just found out yesterday that this weekend is the first large assembly of the Holy Year. Ten thousand communications professionals (Sr. Helen Leija from Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison among them) are in Rome this weekend to celebrate the World of Communication. Starting on Friday, the Feast of St. Francis DeSales, patron of journalists and writers (I did not know!), they are attending liturgies, participating in dialogues, and having an audience with the Pope. (We probably should have sent Susan Clark!).

In the past Pope Francis has encouraged communicators to see their mission as threefold: to make people less lonely; to give voice to the voiceless; and to educate themselves to communicate truthfully. While those might be professional goals for Sr. Helga, who is an editor at *Global Sisters Report*, and our Susan, aren’t they part of the gospel mandate for all of us?

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Language is powerful, and recognizing that is part of our charge today. When I think about all the words I say or write in a day – and the potential they have to be truthful and generous words of connection, or not – it's cause for reflection. I'd like to mark this Jubilee Year by recommitting to wielding words in life-giving, freeing, and encouraging ways. Gina and Judy sang this sentiment for all of us in the Psalm Response:

*Let the words of my mouth
and the thought of my heart
find favor with you, O God.*

Amen.