

# **CELEBRATE SABBATH**

## **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Some people let things happen;  
when you are purposeful, you make things happen.**

### **Nehemiah 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10**

This excerpt tells us that God's word has the power to reveal God's will, change human hearts, transform individuals, cultures and communities, and align our will to the will of God. Ezra, the priest, read and interpreted the law for the people and they responded with sorrow and weeping. The people who gathered at the water gate that day became aware of their failures and sinfulness as they listened to God's word. God's word reveals not only God's goodness and love but also our failures and sinfulness.

Ezra did not permit the people to dwell in regret and sorrow. He encouraged them to dwell not on their sinful selves but on the redeeming and liberating word of God, and so to replace their regretting with rejoicing. The people did as Ezra recommended: "then all the people went to eat and drink... and to celebrate with great joy, for they understood the words that had been expounded to them." (8:12)

**Let the word of God, which we hear today, move us to a similar shift from regret and repentance to a joyful realization and celebration of the healing, liberating mercies of God.**

### **Psalm 19**

The psalmist gazes at the heavens and contemplates the mystery of creation. He "hears" the voice of God...the heavens declare, and the skies proclaim and the earth sings! No speech or word, but the whole marvel of creation speaks, proclaims "glory" of God! Behind every created reality is God's word...no word or speech, creation proclaims! The whole creation, even without a word, spells out the divine word!

God has revealed himself through the marvel of creation. Our poet joined creation in singing the glory of God. Now he moves on to meditating and singing the word that came from the mouth of God, from the very heart of God, the word of Torah, the law of the Lord that keeps all creation in good order. Because, Torah, the Law of God is perfect for man. It revives his soul, refreshes his being and redeems his world. Our poet concludes his poem with a profound prayer: "May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

**The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy,  
giving wisdom to the simple.**

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-30**

Paul called the Corinthians to maintain harmony in community - we are one body, we have one baptism, we drink of the same Spirit, we have different functions but we are all one body in Christ. It is this oneness that helps us recognize that when one of the members of the body of Christ suffers, all are affected. We are tempted to think of differences as a barrier to unity and as obstacles to be overcome. Paul says that God arranged for the diversity within the church....that diversity is God's gift to the church.

**This excerpt invites us to value one another as God's gifts, with all our differences. We are often called upon to tolerate one another despite our differences. Paul calls us to move beyond tolerance to mutual love and respect for one another and all others, not despite differences but because of them.**

### **Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21**

Luke tells us that Jesus formally announced, in the Synagogue in Nazareth, that his mission was one of liberation for all peoples from every form of enslavement, such as sin, injustice, poverty, illness, oppression, etc. Jesus read from the prophet and declared that the words he read, words of liberation, healing and good news were being fulfilled.

The first four verses of this excerpt contain the preface to Luke's Gospel as well as the Acts. The second describes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Luke describes the mission of Jesus as a proclaiming good news for the poor, liberty for captives, sight for the blind, release for prisoners and as a year of favor or Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:8-55), for all. Liberty and release meant forgiveness from sin as well as freedom from all its manifestations - physical, psychological, spiritual - liberation of the whole person, body and soul and mind and spirit.

**Jesus came to liberate us from all forms of enslavement: sickness, poverty, injustice, corruption, inequality, war, violence, etc. Jesus taught us that salvation and liberation are not simply otherworldly realities - they are existential realities, shaping and forming all our relationships and experiences, transforming individuals, cultures, and communities.**

## **Saint of the Day, January 26 - Saints Timothy & Titus and 9 other saints are remembered this day**

### **Timothy**

Timothy had a Greek father and a Jewish mother named Eunice. Being the product of a “mixed” marriage, he was considered illegitimate by the Jews. It was his grandmother, Lois, who first became Christian. We do not have much more information about his birth and early days. Timothy was a convert of Paul around the year 47 and later joined him in his apostolic work. He was with Paul at the founding of the Church in Corinth. During the 15 years he worked with Paul, he became one of his most faithful and trusted friends. He was sent on difficult missions by Paul—often in the face of great disturbance in local churches which Paul had founded.

Timothy was with Paul in Rome during the latter’s house arrest. At some period, Timothy himself was in prison (Hebrews 13:23). Paul installed him as his representative at the Church of Ephesus. Timothy was comparatively young for the work he was doing. “Let no one have contempt for your youth,” Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:12a. Several references seem to indicate that he was timid. And one of Paul’s most frequently quoted lines was addressed to him: “Stop drinking only water, have a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23). He, probably died around 97 C.E.

### **Titus**

We do not know much about the birth and early days of Titus. He has the distinction of being a close friend and disciple of Paul as well as a fellow missionary. He was Greek, apparently from Antioch. Even though Titus was a Gentile, Paul would not let him be forced to undergo circumcision at Jerusalem. Titus is seen as a peacemaker, administrator, great friend. Paul’s second letter to Corinth affords an insight into the depth of his friendship with Titus, and the great fellowship they had in preaching the gospel: “When I went to Troas...I had no relief in my spirit because I did not find my brother Titus. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.... For even when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—external conflicts, internal fears. But God, who encourages the downcast, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus...” (2 Corinthians 2:12a, 13; 7:5-6).

When Paul was having trouble with the community at Corinth, Titus was the bearer of Paul’s severe letter and was successful in smoothing things out. Paul writes he was strengthened not only by the arrival of Titus but also by his encouragement and devotion to Paul. The Letter to Titus addresses him as the administrator of the Christian community on the island of Crete, charged with organizing it, correcting abuses and appointing presbyter-bishops. Titus probably died around 94 C.E.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs