

Jesus' Mission Statement

My dear friends in Christ,

Today's Gospel reading is a continuation of last Sunday's where Jesus entered his hometown synagogue and read from Isaiah 61:1-2, "*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.*" This passage prophesied by Isaiah is associated with the arrival of the Messiah, the Anointed One. And, for Jesus to say (a short sermon) at the beginning of today's gospel passage, "this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" was practically announcing to the whole world, especially to that congregation in front of him, that "I am whom you have been waiting for. I am he whom Isaiah and all the prophets of the Old Testament have been proclaiming for hundreds of years." In other words, this short sermon inaugurates the time of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and presents Jesus' entire ministry as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and expectations.

It is a natural phenomenon that home is a place we experience warmth, love, and welcome. And ordinarily, the thought of going home fills us with joy and the longing to see loved ones. Jesus must have had the same feeling when he decided to visit his native place where he grew up. I imagine he thought of how proud they would be of him. But, rather than love and welcome, Jesus received hostility and rejection. They rejected him because he spoke truth to them about his mission. Their rejection never deterred him from his mission, for the gospel suggests that before coming home to Nazareth and even afterward, Jesus was already performing miracles, curing the sick, casting out demons, and proclaiming the Good News. That was his vision and mission.

As followers of Jesus, our mission cannot be different from Jesus' mission. By virtue of our baptism, we are also anointed not just to answer Catholics, but to share in the life and mission Jesus Christ. And so, we are anointed "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."

What does it mean to "bring glad tidings to the poor?" It means we become an instrument of hope to those who are experiencing poverty of any kind. The "poor" here does not just mean those who are materially lacking, but those who are lacking emotionally, spiritually, relationally, etc. This implies that it is all of us because we know that in each of us, there is some level of poverty in one form or another. It can be poverty in love, in respect, poverty from being valued by those whom we love, poverty in health and, of course, material poverty. Am I a person who brings hope to those who are struggling in their lives, especially starting with my own family? Does my presence in my relationships right now bring light and joy to the people who are part of those relationships? Or, does my presence always bring about division and strife?

"He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and to let the oppressed go free." What are those things in our lives that hold us captive and chain us to the point that we can't move on and experience the life God wants to offer and truly live in God's joy? Possibly addiction to something, paralyzing resentment because of a failed marriage and bad divorce, and the list can go on and on. Christ asks us to unbind ourselves from those things that continue to imprison us.

"Recovery of sight to the blind." This means being able to see the truth, especially the truth that Christ proclaimed, lived, and passed on to the Church. Does my life reflect the teachings of the Church, or do I continue to be blinded by my own biases and those things that would only be convenient for me? Do I stand for the truth of the Gospel, or do I proclaim a different kind of gospel that runs contrary to my faith out of personal convenience? And, do my actions and lifestyle testify to the Gospel that I was baptized into?"

May the grace of Christ strengthen you always.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefula

Reminder

Coffee and Donuts: Please remember that beginning next Sunday, February 10, we will start having **coffee and donuts** in the Parish Hall after the 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sundays at Holy Trinity. Your witness to Christ can materialize by simply sitting across the table with a parishioner, newcomer or visitor and sharing thoughts over a cup of coffee. It will be a time of fellowship only if we all collectively commit to it. We all need to give up a few minutes of our time to build a social community within our church, and the parish coffee hour is the ideal time to do so.

Come to think about it, that guy whose name you can't remember might just become the guy you shoot hoops with on Thursdays or Fridays or play golf with on the weekends. That family who awkwardly looks in your direction sometime at Mass just might love playing board games as much as your family does and may want to start a monthly game night. And those newcomers/visitors could really use a friend. They might really appreciate having someone to tell them what grocery store carries the best meats, fish and cheeses, what restaurant is the best seafood place in town, or why Father's homily should be longer or shorter.

I invite all of us at Holy Trinity use this as an opportunity not only to visit with each other but especially welcome visitors and get to know them so that they will know us through our open hearts.

Change in schedule

As many of you know, Wednesday nights are community nights in our parish. It begins with confessions at 4:30 p.m. followed by Mass, dinner and Religious Education for children and adults. On many occasions, both children and adults feel rushed out of dinner to various Religious Education classes. Our catechists have also expressed a lack of adequate time to teach, as they have only twenty-five minutes for Religious Education for the children most of the time. Educating the future generation in the practice of faith (through First Communion and Confirmation classes) is a core mission of every parish, and as the parish priest, I am responsible for ensuring that Religious Education is well taught. Thus, beginning in February our Wednesday night program will be as follows:

Confessions:	4:30 p.m.
Mass:	5:00 p.m.
Dinner:	5:30 – 6:15 p.m.
Religious Education Classes:	6:15 – 7:15 p.m.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefula
Parish Priest