THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR C

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God, always faithful and true,
you promised to send
the Good News
to all those who love you.
We know
that Jesus is that Good News.
May we show
how much we love you
by opening our hearts
to his words
and obeying his commandments.
We make this prayer to you
through Christ our Lord.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Our first reading focuses on the law of Moses and worship of God. When Ezra stood on the platform, read the law and explained it to all the people, they accepted it by saying, "Amen, amen." "Then they bowed their heads and worshipped God." The reading tells us that true happiness is found in following God's ways.

In our Gospel, Jesus, too, stands before the people and reads from the Word of God. He, too, explains it to those gathered there. This passage in Luke is, as it were, Jesus' own "job description." He declares that he is the one sent and anointed by God to fulfill the prophecy which he has read from Isaiah. Here Jesus reveals the meaning of the Scriptures and his own mission. Throughout Ordinary Time, we will see this mission to the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden unfold in the teachings and actions of Jesus.

Jesus brings Good News to the poor.

FIRST READING: *Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10*

This is a reading from the prophet Nehemiah.

When all the people were gathered
outside the Temple,
Ezra, the priest,
brought the book of the law of Moses
to read it to them.
He stood on a wooden platform
which the people had made for him,
and he held the book up high
so that everyone could see it.
When he opened the book of the law,
all the people stood up.
And he read to them
from early morning until noon.
All the people,
the men, women, and the children
who were old enough to understand,
listened carefully to what Ezra read.
Then he explained the law of Moses to them
so that they could understand it.
When he finished, Ezra blessed God,
and all the people raised their hands high and said,

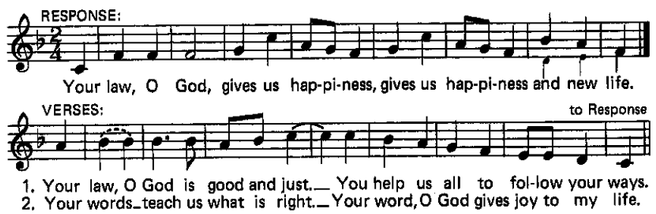
"Amen, amen!"

[Then Nehemiah, who was the leader,
said to the people,

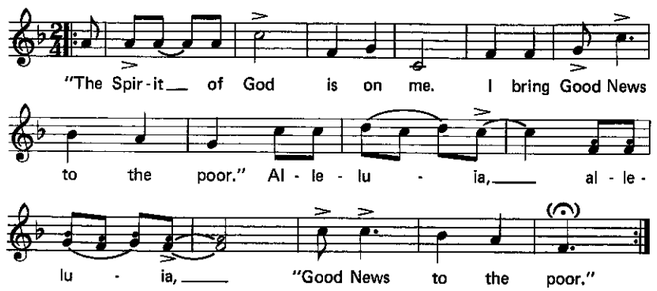
"Today is a special day for God, a holy day.
Eat and drink whatever you like.
And be sure to give something to those
who don't have anything to eat or drink,
because this is a holy day for God. Be happy.
You will be strong
when you find your joy in God."]

This is the Word of God.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 19*



GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: *Luke 4:14-21*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Luke.

(After he had been in the desert for forty days,)

Jesus came back to Galilee
filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.
He taught in the synagogues,
and people all around heard about him
and said wonderful things about him.

When he went to the town of Nazareth
where he had grown up,
he went to the synagogue
on the Sabbath day as he always did.
He stood up to read,
and the book of the prophet Isaiah
was handed to him.
Jesus opened the book
and found the place where it says,

"The Spirit of God is upon me.
God has anointed me
and sent me to bring Good News to the poor,
to proclaim freedom
to those who are oppressed by others,
to give sight to the blind,
and to announce a special time of blessing from God."

Then Jesus closed the book,
gave it back to the server and sat down.
Everyone in the synagogue was looking at him.

Jesus said to them,

"What I have just read to you has come true
right here and now, while you are listening."

This is the Good News of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Since it would be difficult to reflect on both of these readings, we have chosen to concentrate on the Gospel.

Even with children, it is important to proclaim clearly that Jesus' mission was to help those in need. He consistently speaks of helping the poor, the blind, the lame, the deaf, the oppressed—in short, those who are most in need.

The reflections on the Gospel should center on two things:

1) Jesus tells us that he was anointed by the Spirit for his mission. *How do we see Jesus carrying out his mission in the Gospels?* Help the children recall examples of this from the life of Jesus, stories he told (the Good Samaritan), his own actions (healing the blind, etc.)

2) *Since we too are anointed by the Spirit in our Baptism, we have the same mission.* How can we carry it out?

Help the children discover in themselves a real concern for the poor and those in need. Help them realize tangible ways they can help. Be sure that this discussion stays within the capabilities of their age. While there are genuine ways they can live this, we are, for the most part, planting seeds for the future. What is important is that they see that *service is the Christian way.*