

**Third Sunday of the Year
January 21, 2007
By Father Charles Bowes**

**Nehemiah 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19:8-10, 15
1 Corinthians 12:12-30
Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21**

We preach Jesus in the way we live.

I once had an assistant priest whose mother gave what I think is probably the best advice on preaching her son or any priest could hear - what she called her rule of the five "b's" of homiletics: "Be brief, boy, be brief." She said this to her son making sure, of course, that I was within easy earshot.

And along comes Jesus in our gospel, giving his whole homily in just nine words, translated: "Today, this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Today, we simply hear the introduction, the prologue to the greatest homily ever preached. Or, perhaps better said, the greatest homily that is still being preached. These nine simple words introduced the homily that continues to live on, to "bring glad tidings" and "proclaim the Lord's favor" to the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, the oppressed and the helpless.

As Jesus' homily lives on, so too does his body, you and I, the church. St. Paul's words to the Corinthians in the second reading today, chapter 12, remind us that we are all part of the whole of the community of the church, the body of Christ. We all have a part in what Jesus began. The specifics of our vocations and gifts differ from each other, yet the goal

and substance are the same. We are all part of the body of Christ and work to that end.

This involves a spirit of humility, inasmuch as my gifts are not yours and yours are not mine. We avoid the temptation to look at others and be spiritually envious of their gifts. God loves us equally and bestows his gifts in different ways for the building of the kingdom. Thank goodness for our differences! If we were all preachers, there would be no one to listen to us! Recently, Pope Benedict observed that our faith is really a simple faith. It's not complicated. Very often we look for extraordinary ways to live our faith. We know the need to step up and witness when we are faced with extraordinary situations and circumstances. This could include a situation where our faith and beliefs are being immediately challenged or threatened.

This is true especially in this anniversary week of the legalization of abortion and the consequent lessening of respect for all life of whatever age. These situations certainly deserve our faith response.

However, following the Pope's advice, we dare not overlook the small, unsensational opportunities we have each day to witness to our faith. Such opportunities are as simple as making a phone call, smiling at a stranger, making an anonymous gesture of generosity to the needy, spending an hour or two of

our time with a shut-in, helping an elderly neighbor with housework or repairs, volunteering at a community or parish function, and the like. The list could be endless.

Through us and through others, Jesus' love reaches out perfectly to all people of all times. His outreach is our model for life as his followers. We don't overlook the small things in daily living that provide opportunities to witness anytime and anywhere.

I draw inspiration from advice attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel always, and sometimes use words."

We preach Jesus in the way we live.