

From Dissension to Harmony

By: Fr. Munachi E. Ezeopu, CSSP

There is an old African fable showing that every member of the community, including those who appear to be useless, are important after all. Once upon a time, the various parts of the body began complaining against the stomach. "Look at me," says the hand, "I till the soil to plant the seeds, I harvest the crops, I prepare the food. All that the stomach ever does is lie there waiting to be fed. This is unfair." The feet agreed, "Me too, I carry the heavy stomach around all day, I carry him to the farm to get food, I carry him to the river to get water, I even carry him up the palm tree to get palm wine, and all the stomach ever does is lie there and expect to get his ration of food, water and wine whenever he needs them. This is unfair." The head, too complained how he carries all the heavy load from the farm and from the river, all to feed the stomach who does nothing to help. The parts of the body decided that this injustice must stop. To force the issue, they decided to embark on a protest action. They agreed to stop working and feeding the lazy stomach until the stomach learns to be a responsible citizen of the body.

A whole day went by and the stomach was not given any food or water or wine. All that the stomach did was groan from time to time while the others taunted him. By the second day of starving the stomach, the head said that he was beginning to feel dizzy. By the third day, the hands reported that they were feeling weak, and the feet were wobbly and could not stand straight. Then it dawned on them that, much as they were visibly supporting the stomach, the stomach was also supporting them in a less obvious but equally important way. It dawned on them that by feeding the stomach they were feeding themselves without knowing it. So they called off their strike action and went back to work to feed the stomach. Their strength returned and together with the stomach they lived happily together after.

The story makes the point that everybody in the community is making a vital contribution, even those who appear to do nothing but consume what others produce. Paul, in the 2nd reading, makes a similar point.

The members of the body that *seem* to be weaker are indispensable. Those members of the body that *we think* less honourable are clothed with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body (1 Corinthians 12:22-25).

We know that poor people envy rich people. What we do not know is that sometimes it is rich people who envy poor people? Why do the rich envy the poor for paying no taxes? Haven't you heard people complain that they pay their taxes and people on welfare get a free ride? If you feel street people and welfare recipients are getting a free ride, try trading places with them for one cold night.

I know a bishop who had a very able and gifted man in his pastoral council. If you wanted anything done, and done well, give it to this man. One day the bishop called him and gave him another assignment. This man could not bear it any longer? "My Lord," he said, "am I the only person in the pastoral council. Why must every work be given to me while there are some people there doing absolutely nothing? The wise bishop said to him, "Would you want me to pray so that no one every calls on you to do anything again?" The man understood. He would not like to trade places with the less gifted members of the council who cannot complete an assignment. From then on he stopped complaining and was happy to put his talents to work for the common good.

Today the word of God challenges us to give up that secret pleasure we get by comparing ourselves with others and thinking that other people are inferior. No part of the human body is inferior. In the same way, no member of the church community should be regarded as inferior. God has given each one of us different gifts, different opportunities, different job descriptions in life. Our concern should be to try to be faithful to the grace that God gives us day by day. On the last day, God will tell us who did more than the other. And, oh, what a surprise that would be!

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Nehemiah 8:2-10

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Luke 1:1-4 : 4:14-21

January 27, 2013

靈 修 生 活

常 年 期 第 三 主 日

阿爾貝、茫諾怡樞機主教

本主日禮儀中我們所讀的那段福音，首先給我們展示出路加福音中的序言(路一 1-4)，在其中聖經作者解釋說已經有許多人述說過有關耶穌的事蹟，但是他下定決心仔細地偵察一切有關聯的環境，以便給信徒們寫出一份有條不紊的報告，為的是使他們體會到他們接受的訓導是何等地穩固。

這裡我們發覺到路加所關心的是能給予基督信徒們一篇正確可靠的正文，一篇經過仔細查考並確切證實過的文本，其目的是使信德能根深蒂固地建立在天主的真正啓示上。

在序言之後，今天的福音緊接著就述說耶穌訓導的開端。耶穌在受洗及受誘惑之後便回到加里納亞。那時他充滿了聖神的能力並開始在會堂中訓導。在這裡給我們展示了一項在他成長的城市納匝肋的訓導。

耶穌在安息日進入會堂--安息日為猶太人是一個神聖的日子，這一天他們聚集在會堂中祈禱、聆聽天主聖言和注釋--他並且站起來宣讀。有人把依撒意亞先知的書卷遞給他，他打開書卷，找到書中寫的那一段：「上主的神臨於我身上，因為祂給我傅了油並且派遣了我……」。

依撒意亞先知寫的這一段的確重要，他述說一位神秘人物，上主的神降到他身上，並給他傅油祝聖了他且派遣了他。這位人物的使命是個快樂的使命、解放的使命。他被派遣去向窮人們宣講福音，宣講快樂的喜訊(希臘話的“福音”原來的意思是“喜訊”)。為囚犯是一種解放的訊息、為盲人是痊癒的喜訊、為受壓迫的人是自由的喜訊；是上主的一種恩寵年的訊息，也就是說聖年、是大喜年的訊息。

然後耶穌把書卷卷起來，遞給服務員就坐下來。眾人都注視他且等待他的解釋。其實它非常簡單：「你們剛才聽過的這段聖經，今天應驗了」。

耶穌宣告說依撒意亞先知的預言，今天在他本人身上實現了。事實上在約旦河上受洗，上主的神便臨於他身上。這樣耶穌便以靈性的傅油被祝聖了，於是他便開始了他的使命，這是一種解放和快樂的使命(“是上主的恩寵年”)。這一切都非常美妙。

我們可以想像到群眾們的反應，確實是充滿了驚喜(就如路加福音隨後所提到的，對這一點我們下主日可讀到)。依撒意亞先知的預言在耶穌身上應驗了。以前所許諾的，現在變成了事實。耶穌便是把聖經完成的那一位。另外，為了我們對耶穌的認識，我們可以想像到聖經是多麼的重要。為使我們更能瞭解耶穌，教會向來一直閱讀舊約，尤其是關於祂的預言。耶穌本人，在祂復活後，便把解釋聖經的權柄交托給了祂的宗徒們，就如聖路加在他所寫的福音中給我們述說的(路二四 27)。

天主聖言的特徵是把預言都應驗在耶穌的生活和祂本人身上。誰想要認識耶穌，就應該閱讀聖經。聖 Girolamo 說，誰不懂聖經，便是不瞭解耶穌。所以閱讀聖經，為我們大家是一件重要的事。

聖教會非常關心使我們每主日在聖道禮儀中接觸聖經。那麼我們就應該專心聆聽為我們所選取的聖經章節。這些都是我們的精神食糧，是使我們向前進的力量，是指引我們路途的明燈。借助聖經，我們會更深刻地與耶穌接觸，會更好地瞭解祂並能較大的被祂吸引。

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 一 月 廿 七 日

厄 7-8:2-10；格前 12:12-30；路 1:1-4；4:14-21