

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 22/23 January 2022.

Every so often when the mood strikes me I like to pop into antique shops such as Turn O' the Century Antiques or the Sherwood Bazaar just up the road. Sometimes I'll find a piece that appeals to me and fits in with my lounge, dining or bedroom. I know of people who go to shops like these when they're first setting up their home, find an object they like and build their room decor around this object's history, style and colour.

It's struck me more than once that life is a lot like an antique shop, a bazaar chock full of all sorts of colours and flavours of opinions, beliefs and philosophies for living. Somehow, at some time, we settle on a few of these and create our lives around them. The truth though is that no matter how they're presented they are all just old beliefs dusted off, recycled and repackaged as something new for our times. As the Old Testament says, there really is nothing new under the Sun!

This is one good reason for looking to Jesus and His teachings as the best way to live our lives. He offers something completely new to us, a New Testament and covenant that has inbuilt power to renew itself in every age and in everyone. He came to Nazareth, His old home town, to the Synagogue that He knew so well, full of His relatives, old friends and neighbours. He took up the precious old scroll of Isaiah the Prophet, dusted it off and read words that He and those gathered knew well. Then He said and did something that no one expected. He didn't talk to them about God's word being fulfilled in some distant future, but startlingly said that what He'd read was happening now, even as they were listening. There was to be no more waiting for God to act because God was acting in Him. There was no more reason to wait for the Good News to be

heard, for the liberation of captives, for the blind to see and the oppressed to go free, because the Lord's year of favour was unfolding, an ever present now, a happening made so by His own active, powerful word and life. He was God's Word after all, born as one of, always present to and for us, working effectively. He wasn't some antique, cleaned and tarted up like all of the other recycled beliefs, philosophies, policies and politics known ever known to human history.

Hundreds of years before this Nazareth moment, Ezra and Nehemiah relied on a newly discovered scroll of Gods Law to inspire and bring joy to a defeated people, restoring their pride and purpose as they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Since God always lives, Gods Word is always living, never dead but ever doing what it says. St. Paul makes this point when he tells us that we are full of God's Spirit, making up Christ's Body today. Christ's body isn't dead, for if it were what possible good or benefit would that be to us? No, it's alive and our lives are the living proof of it. This is why our belonging to the Body matters, for it builds our belief.

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, receiving the grace by which you bring us to new life, we may always glory in your gift. This is our prayer after communion, expressing our living belief. It reminds us of the real and ever present power of God's word amongst us now, guiding and sustaining each and all of us in these times of change and uncertainty. Let's not be sad then, for the joy of the Lord is always our strength.