

## The 3rd Sunday Liturgy

### ■ The 70th Sharing of the Word

#### ● First Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10

On the Feast of Trumpets (July 1), the people gathered voluntarily and requested that Ezra, the priest, read the Law to them. Ezra stood on a wooden platform and, along with many assistants (Levites), read and explained the Book of the Law (Torah) in a way that the people could understand. The passages read are believed to include Deuteronomy 28 (Blessings and Curses), Deuteronomy 31 (Command to Read the Law), Leviticus 26 (Blessings and Curses), and Leviticus 23 (Regulations for the Feast of Trumpets).

The people stood as a sign of respect for the Word of God, and the spirit of worship filled the entire assembly, leading them to respond in unison with "Amen" (a declaration of agreement and certainty). Since the people spoke Aramaic and the Book of the Law was written in Hebrew, the Levites translated and explained the text, enabling the people to understand it clearly.

When the people became aware of their sinfulness in light of the Law, they wept in repentance. However, Ezra encouraged them, saying, "Today is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep. Celebrate this day as a day of joy in the Lord." He urged them to transform the day into one of gratitude and celebration.

#### 【Nehemiah】

After the Babylonian exile, Nehemiah received permission from the Persian king (Artaxerxes) to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and was even granted financial support (Nehemiah 2:6-8). This permission stemmed from political motives to strengthen and stabilize the region, trust in Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:11), and God's providence.

#### 【Feast of Trumpets】

This was a sacred day to commemorate the start of a new year dedicated to serving God, marked by repentance and renewed devotion. Work was prohibited on this holy day (Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1).

#### 【Rejoicing in the Lord】

Although the Israelites failed to fully keep the Law and committed sins, God's unchanging love, mercy, and forgiveness allowed them to return from exile and worship Him again. They rejoiced in God's abiding presence and grace (Psalm 103:8-12).

#### ● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Paul uses the image of a body to explain the Church community. Just as the body is one but made up of many parts, so too is the Church—a single body comprised of diverse members. Even though the members come from different backgrounds, they are united as one body through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase "drink of one Spirit" evokes the image of making the Spirit an integral part of oneself. Paul emphasizes that the Church's diversity should not lead to comparisons or self-deprecation. Every person is essential, and members are given different gifts and roles by God. These should be respected, as God assigns each person their unique function.

The Church thrives on harmony, not uniformity, as members acknowledge the necessity and value of one another. Even the seemingly weaker parts of the body play indispensable roles, and in God's eyes, all are equally important and honored. Members must care for one another, sharing in both suffering and joy.

Since each believer is part of Christ's body, they are called to recognize their responsibilities and significance. When members are entrusted with spiritual gifts, such as teaching or leadership, they must fulfill their roles in unity to serve the Church's singular purpose. Gratitude for individual gifts and their full utilization are essential for the Church to function effectively.

#### ● Gospel Reading: Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Luke sets out to compile an accurate account of the events surrounding Jesus' ministry by examining oral traditions

and early writings. He meticulously investigates the events from the beginning of Jesus' life and writes this Gospel to assure Theophilus (meaning "lover of God," which could be a personal name or a symbolic title) that the teachings he received are reliable. This Gospel is both a personal dedication and a document intended for wider circulation. After overcoming trials in the wilderness, Jesus, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, returns to Galilee. News of His ministry spreads, and He gains respect in the synagogues where He teaches. Following His usual practice, Jesus enters the synagogue, takes the scroll of Isaiah, and reads a passage (Isaiah 61:1-2) that outlines the Messiah's mission of salvation. He declares, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," implying that He is the Messiah. Luke presents this declaration as Jesus' inaugural public message, marking the beginning of His mission to fulfill God's promise of salvation.

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