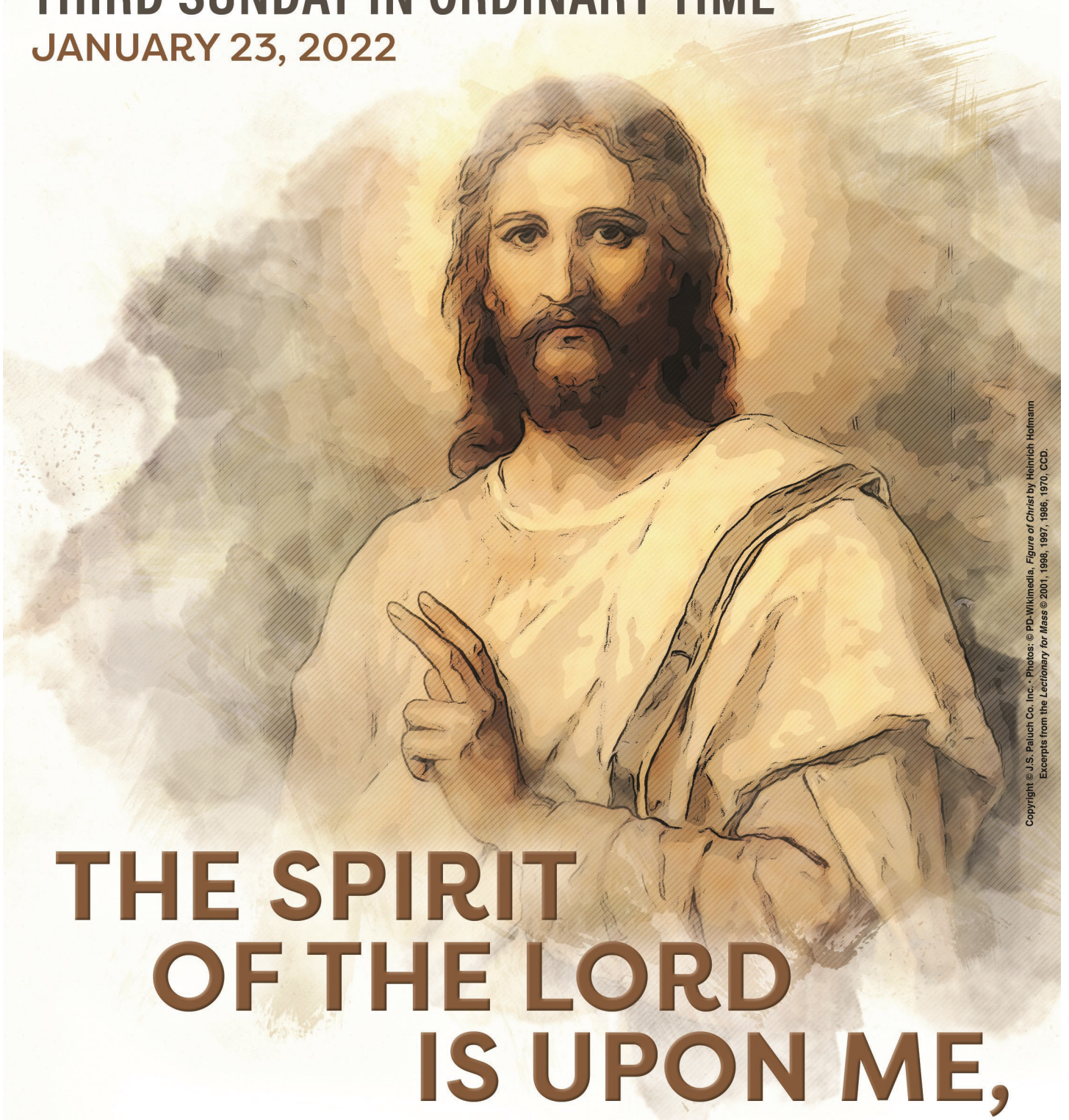


**THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
JANUARY 23, 2022



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**THE SPIRIT  
OF THE LORD  
IS UPON ME,**

because he has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

LUKE 4:18

## God's Law

Scripture has always held God's law to be the path to human happiness. In today's first reading, Ezra the priest reads the scroll of the law to the people returned from exile. They weep—then are joyful. Israel's relationship with God had always been defined by how they kept and lived God's law. The author of Psalm 96 likewise praises the law of God as the source of wisdom, joy and enlightenment, purity and justice.

In his advice to the bickering Corinthians, Paul points out that, just as God has made all parts of a human body essential for the health of the whole, living as "Christ's body" requires that each member be recognized as necessary for the good of all. Finally, in Luke's Gospel Jesus claims that the Spirit is sending him to relieve human suffering. Like Ezra, he is reading from a scroll, proclaiming God's "law" of mercy to those in need.

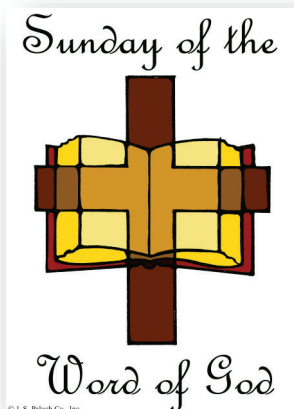
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## Saints and Special Observances

- Sunday:** Third Sunday in Ordinary Time;  
Sunday of the Word of God
- Monday:** St. Francis de Sales
- Tuesday:** The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle;  
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends
- Wednesday:** Ss. Timothy and Titus
- Thursday:** St. Angela Merici
- Friday:** St. Thomas Aquinas
- Saturday:** Blessed Virgin Mary

## Readings for the Week

- Monday:** 2 Sm 5:1-7, 10; Ps 89:20-22, 25-26;  
Mk 3:22-30
- Tuesday:** Acts 22:3-16 or 9:1-22; Ps 117:1bc, 2;  
Mk 16:15-18
- Wednesday:** 2 Tm 1:1-18 or Ti 1:1-5; Ps 89:4-5,  
27-30; Mk 4:1-20
- Thursday:** 2 Sm 7:18-19, 24-29; Ps 132:1-5, 11-14;  
Mk 4:21-25
- Friday:** 2 Sm 11:1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17;  
Ps 51:3-7, 10-11; Mk 4:26-34
- Saturday:** 2 Sm 12:1-7a, 10-17; Ps 51:12-17;  
Mk 4:35-41
- Sunday:** Jer 1:4-5, 17-19; Ps 71:1-6, 15, 17;  
1 Cor 12:31 — 13:13 [13:4-13];  
Lk 4:21-30



## Today's Readings

**First Reading** — Ezra read from the book of the law of God to the assembled people. They understood and accepted the law (Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10).

**Psalm** — Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life (Psalm 19).

**Second Reading** — As the body with its many parts is still one body, so it is with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-30 [12-14, 27]).

**Gospel** — While attending worship in the Nazarean synagogue, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah and declares himself to be the fulfillment of the prophecy (Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21).

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## Prayer Of The Week

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Almighty ever-living God,  
direct our actions according to your good  
pleasure, that in the name of your beloved  
Son we may abound in good works.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.

## Reflection question:

**How can I allow God to direct my actions this week?**

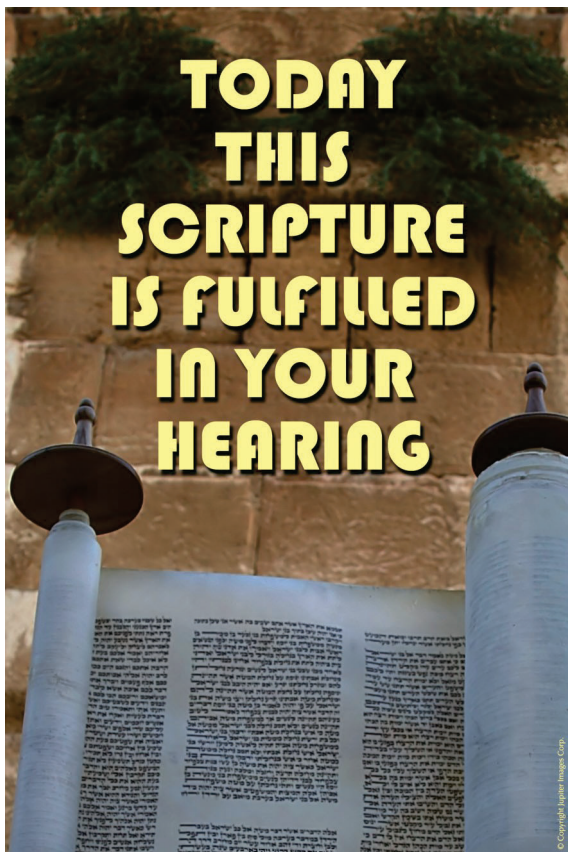
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## Treasures From Our Tradition

The cause of church unity is commended to Christians for prayer and action every year around this time. This week is not so much to focus on the many divisions within the Christian family, but on bonds of faith and mission. Even though Christians have always shown an inclination to fracture, spin off, and mutate into new expressions, recent history shows some new points of convergence and agreement. Catholics are more firmly rooted in the word of God, for example, and many Protestants are more likely to celebrate Communion than in years past. Some denominations are merging and pooling resources, and people from various traditions are collaborating on projects.

The call of this week is to be mindful of the diversity of our traditions and customs while treasuring what we hold in common. The old advice to "lighten up" is good medicine, because sometimes our differences are delightful and amusing. If someone says, "Let us pray," a Catholic might close the eyes, bow the head and fold hands; a Protestant reach out and clasp hands with the person in the next chair; and someone belonging to an Orthodox tradition might stand up with eyes wide open. Each has taken a different path, but the goal is always the same. This is a week not for focusing on the well-worn paths of divergence, but for mutual delight in a common goal.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



## Rejoicing in the Lord

In the first reading, Ezra gets a strange reaction from the people to whom he reads the book of the law. First they lie down, with faces to the ground, and then they all are weeping. Remember the background of this reading. The people of Israel had returned from exile and needed to become a unified nation. Most had never heard the laws, so when they learned what was expected of them and realized how much of the Law they had broken, they wept from shame. Many probably didn't know that they had been breaking the law. Others might have been overwhelmed with all the requirements of the law.

Ezra and Nehemiah console the people by reminding them that their return makes this a day "holy to the LORD" (Nehemiah 8:10). He adds that they would draw strength from "rejoicing in the LORD." That may be good advice for us also.

We might find ourselves so trapped in sin that we think we could never be forgiven. We need to remember that Jesus loved sinners so much that he gave his life on the cross to free us from sin. No sin can be so bad that God's love cannot forgive it. In other words, God's forgiveness is only limited by our failure to ask for it. As the psalms say, God's mercy endures forever. In fact, the more I have to repent, the more God wants to forgive. So we can rejoice in the Lord's forgiveness and the Spirit will give us the strength to change our lives. And what about those who find the law overwhelming? That usually means a lack of faith in God's willingness to help us or in our ability to do the best we can to live as Christians. It can also be because we have forgotten Jesus' saying that all of God's laws are contained in the command to love God and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. The more we come to accept God's presence in our lives and see God in others, the easier it becomes to keep the law of love.

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## Winter Warmth

One kind word can warm three winter months.

—Japanese proverb

# God's Word for Children

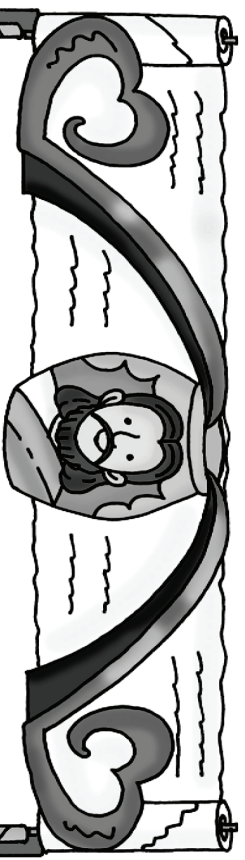
Each one of us is an important part of God's family.  
Every part of our human bodies is important, too!  
Pick one of the numbers that make each sentence true.



2 5 1

We have \_\_\_ nose.  
We have \_\_\_ fingers on each hand.  
We have \_\_\_ mouth.  
We have \_\_\_ ears.  
We have \_\_\_ toes on each foot.  
We have \_\_\_ head.  
We have \_\_\_ eyes.  
We have \_\_\_ arms.  
We have \_\_\_ legs.

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## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus read words of the prophet Isaiah from a scroll (Luke 4:18).  
Isaiah described what God sent Jesus to do.  
Solve the math problems to fill in the missing words.

bring glad tidings to the _____ (10 + 10)	7=captives
proclaim liberty to _____ (16-9)	8=free
give sight to the _____ (5+7)	10=Lord
let the oppressed go _____ (20-12)	12=blind
proclaim a year acceptable to the _____ (7+3)	20=poor

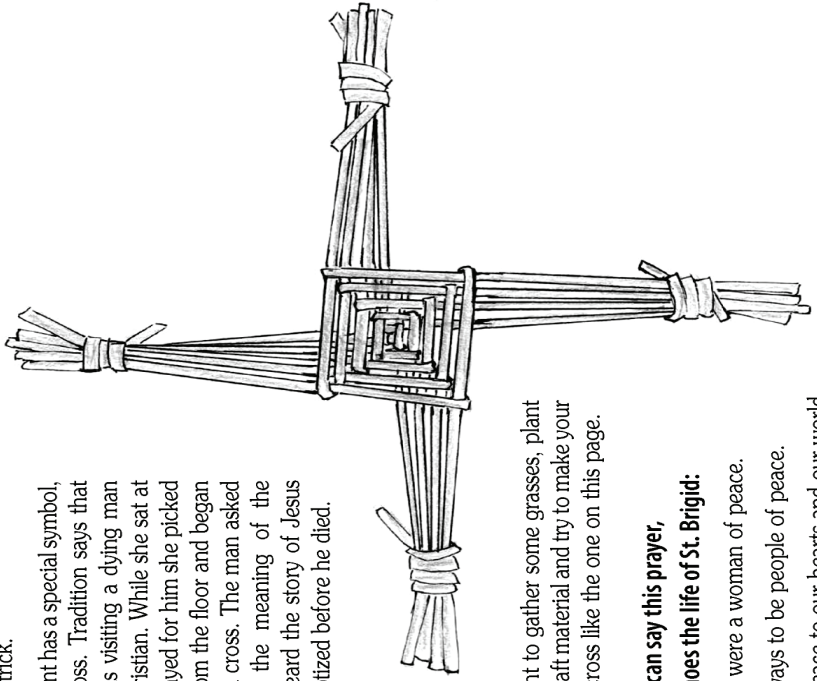
# CATHOLIC CORNER

## A WOMAN OF PEACE

Most people recognize St. Patrick as a patron saint of Ireland. On February 1, we celebrate the feast of another Irish patron, St. Brigid. Brigid was born around the year 450 A.D. near Kildare in Ireland. When she was young, she worked as a dairy maid. When she could, she would give milk, butter, and cheese to the poor. She was loved by those who benefited from her goodness.

Later in her life she founded the first convent for women in Ireland near Kildare and continued her work with the poor. When she died, around 525 A.D., she was buried in Downpatrick near the grave of St. Patrick.

This beloved saint has a special symbol, the St. Brigid's cross. Tradition says that one day Brigid was visiting a dying man who was not a Christian. While she sat at his bedside and prayed for him she picked up some rushes from the floor and began folding them into a cross. The man asked Brigid to explain the meaning of the cross. When he heard the story of Jesus he asked to be baptized before he died.

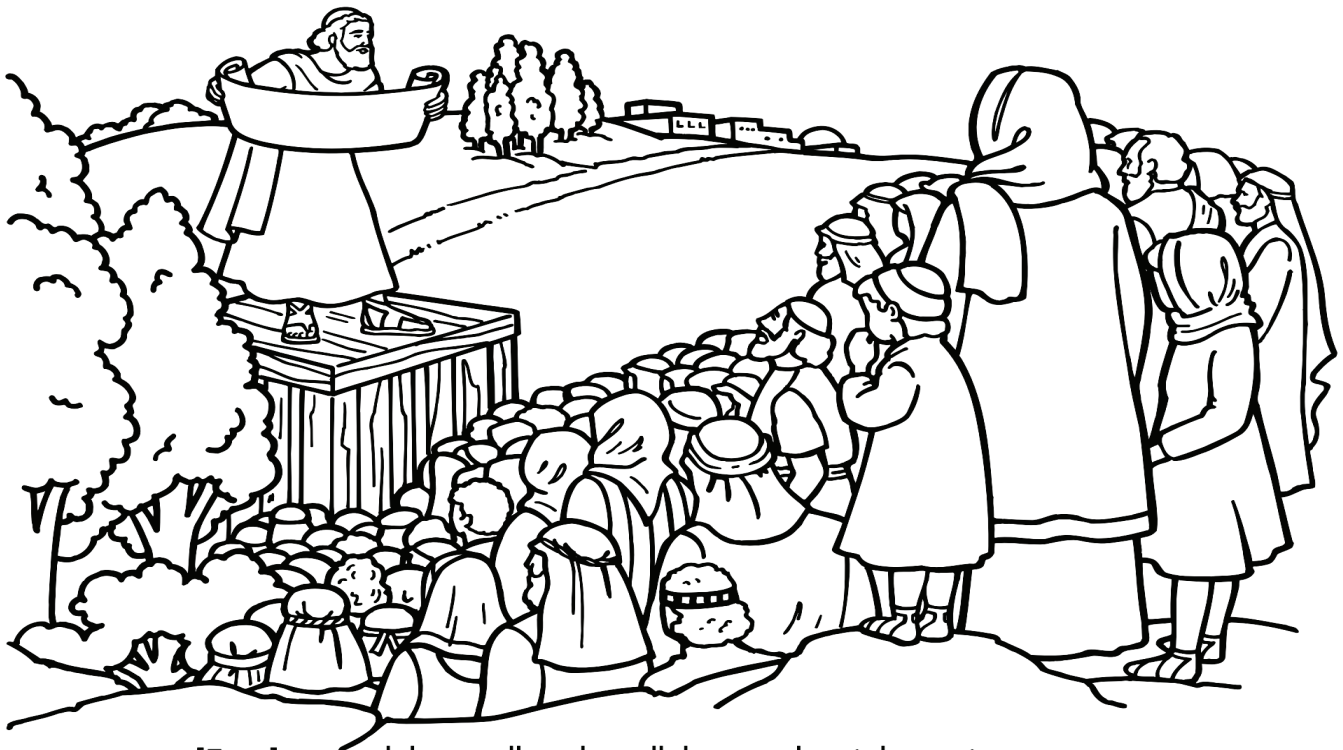


You might want to gather some grasses, plant leaves, or other craft material and try to make your own St. Brigid's cross like the one on this page.

**You can say this prayer,**  
**which echoes the life of St. Brigid:**

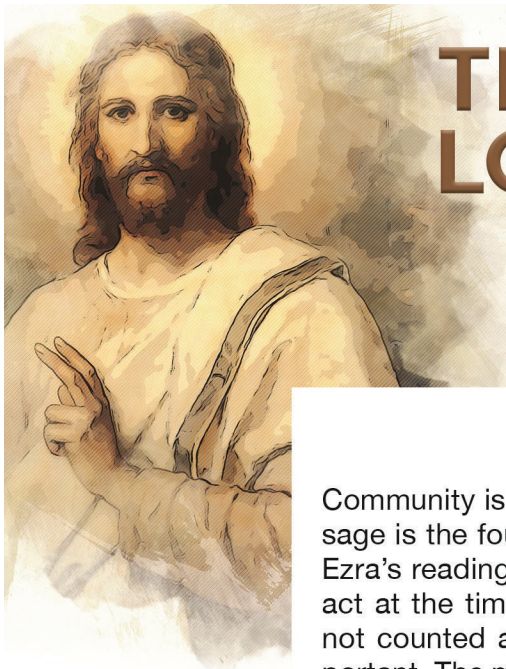
Brigid, you were a woman of peace.  
Teach us always to be people of peace.

Help us to bring peace to our hearts and our world.



[Ezra] opened the scroll so that all the people might see it . . .  
the men, the women, and those children old enough to understand.

Nehemiah 8 : 5 - 3



# THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,

because he has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

LUKE 4:18

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## COMMUNITY

Community is important. Community is essential. Community is crucial. This message is the foundation of today's readings from Nehemiah, Corinthians, and Luke. Ezra's reading of the scroll is done in front of the community, including—a radical act at the time—women, and children old enough to understand, groups usually not counted among those hearing God's promise proclaimed. Community is important. The mystical Body of Christ, like the human body, functions best and most fully when all members are playing the role for which they were meant. Community is essential. God's word is fulfilled when the community has heard it, and witnessed it. In Luke, the baptism and desert trials of Jesus lead to the synagogue scene, which will then lead Jesus to his public ministry of proclaiming the reign of God. He eventually will journey to Jerusalem and his crucifixion. Community is crucial.

## ONE BODY, ONE JESUS

Our liturgical calendar separates different Gospel scenes, which can sometimes do them a bit of a disservice. The liturgical year, of course, has its own rhythm and purpose, into which the stories of the life of Jesus are placed. However, when Luke was organizing his Gospel (for "Theophilus" the lover of God whom we encounter in today's Gospel introduction), today's scene was part of a three-fold structure: the baptism of Jesus; the temptation in the desert; the announcement of the public mission in the synagogue at Nazareth. Linking these is the Holy Spirit, who descended on the body of Jesus at his baptism, who filled his body as he endured his forty-day trial, and who is upon his body to announce and to bring about God's reign, a mission he fulfills with his body on the cross. The incarnation (the "in-flesh-ing") of Jesus, which we think of in connection with his birth, remains central to his story.

## ONE CHRIST, ONE BODY

Last week's reading from Corinthians concerned the one Spirit who gives many gifts, yet is the source of our unity. Paul continues this theme today using the image of the body, whose different members each have an important and distinct role to play. The Spirit of baptism forms that one mystical Body of Christ. The Spirit of baptism fills the many members, but unites them always as one. The Spirit of baptism is on each member, as it was for Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth. That Spirit of our baptism anoints each of us as a member of Christ's Body to be glad tidings, proclaim liberty, bring clearer vision, lift the oppressed, to announce God's reign to all. As different members of Christ's Body, we are each called upon to do this in our own way. We may face opposition or rejection, as Jesus did, but we can always turn again in faith to the Spirit of our baptism who is still with us.

## TODAY'S READINGS

Nehemiah 8:2–4a, 5–6, 8–10

Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 15

1 Corinthians 12:12–30 [12–14, 27]

Luke 1:1–4; 4:14–21