

*Ordinary Time 3C 2016*

*The Grocery Line*

Last week when I was grocery shopping, I had an interesting experience. I was in the checkout line waiting to pay for my groceries when a woman engaged me in conversation. At first, I thought she was a parishioner whose name I had forgotten; but I soon realized that she was not a parishioner. After a few moments, she held out her hand with three rocks in it, each one with a beautiful hand-painted cross. Choose one, she said; and so I chose the smallest rock. She then asked me, what verse did you get? And so I turned the rock over, and it read Luke 4:18-19. I don't know that one she said to me. And so I replied, it's from Jesus' sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. She was a bit surprised that I knew this and asked me, what church I attended. I proudly said, St. Mary's in Simsbury; the people are nice, even if the pastor is a bit strange.

I am more and more convinced that nothing happens by chance in our lives. In God's great plan what we call coincidence is divine providence. And so, when I returned home, I looked up the verse. Yes, I was right. It was from Jesus' sermon at Nazareth, the very text we read in today's gospel! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor!

I thought about that verse all week, and I wondered why it was given to me. What did the woman intend when she painted that verse number on the rock? At first, I said, this is her way of proclaiming the gospel to me. This is her way of saying the Spirit of the

Lord was upon Jesus to proclaim good news to us. And so we must accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Then, as I was preparing this homily, I spent a lot of time reflecting on the reading from St. Paul in which that great apostle tells us that each of us, with our special gifts from the Spirit, are members of the Body of Christ. And then I began to understand the verse in another way.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*, sending *me* forth to proclaim the gospel to all in need. Not only is the Spirit of the Lord upon me, the Spirit of the Lord is also upon *you*. The Spirit of the Lord is upon all of us who have been baptized into Christ, gifting us with gifts so that we can proclaim the gospel

And so I thought, maybe that is what the Lord was telling me through this encounter in the grocery line, where I would otherwise have been reading those newspapers that are always warning us of an alien invasion or some other sore of disaster. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us, upon each one of us, without exception. If you were baptized, the Spirit of the Lord is upon you. If you were baptized, you have a gift of the Spirit, even if you have not yet discovered it. And if the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, then we like Jesus have been called to preach the grace of the gospel to others.

So then next time you are in a grocery line, remember that you, yes you, have been called to preach the gospel because the Spirit of the Lord that is upon Jesus is upon you as well!