

WEEKLY MEDITATION

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And stood up to read; and He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because he has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; and they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

This reading from the Gospel appointed for the new Church Year (Luke 4:16 -22) connects the beginning of the Lord's public ministry with the work of the coming messiah that had been proclaimed in Isaiah's prophecy of salvation (Isaiah 61: 1-9). The Gospel affirms the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for His people, and indeed - as we follow the liturgical year - of the liberation and renewal and transformation of all of life in Him.

We begin each Church Year on this optimistic note, a note full of hope and promise. The Lord has acted and is acting and will continue to act for us. His grace has touched us and will continue to work its mysterious, wonderful power in our lives. And because we are called by His name - because we are followers of Christ, *Christians* - we are His agents, His ministers. We called to be doers of His will. In fact, our ministry and service continue the Lord's saving work into and through each and every new year. Our attention to one another, and especially to persons in need, is the remarkable way in which the Lord Himself encounters and ministers to us and is encountered by us.

Let us pray that the Church New Year brings to all of us a sense of the possibilities we have in our own life to try to touch others with His healing touch, His word of hope and reconciliation, His forgiveness, His acts of mercy and compassion.

A community of such mutual love and service is like an oasis in the desert of this fallen world. May it be said of us *that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified* (Isaiah 61:9)

~Fr. Andrew

