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Gospel for 10 January: The "Today" of Christ

Commentary on the Gospel for the Friday after Epiphany. "The Scriptures are being fulfilled today even as you listen." Let us not put off until tomorrow the decision that the Lord expects of us 'today': a conversion, forgiving and accepting forgiveness, starting again with the help of grace, full surrender.

Gospel (Lk 4:14-22a)

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his

reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him.

He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it is written: *The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year favour.*

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, "The Scriptures are being

fulfilled today even as you listen."
And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips.

Gospel Commentary

We accompany Jesus to the synagogue in Nazareth, the town where He grew up. As was His custom every Sabbath, He goes there to pray and listen to the Word of God. He had learned to do this naturally, joining Joseph and Mary as a child, participating as a family.

The account in the Gospel of Luke introduces us to this synagogue service. After some prayers, a section from the Pentateuch or Torah—the Law of God—is read, followed by a prophetic text that illuminates the meaning of the Law's teaching. The one presiding invites someone

present to read, or someone suitably prepared may volunteer to stand, read the passage, and then explain the meaning of God's Word.

On this occasion, Jesus stands up. From the scroll of the prophet Isaiah handed to Him, He finds a text where the prophet speaks of the Lord's anointed, who brings the good news of salvation and announces that God will deliver the people from their afflictions. These are words of comfort, addressed to the people of Judah, hard at work rebuilding after decades of ruin and decline following the Babylonian conquest of their land in the early 6th century BC. The returning exiles feel overwhelmed, lacking the strength to heal so many material and moral wounds. Yet, God will fulfill their hopes for salvation.

However, what Jesus reads in the synagogue is not merely a

remembrance of a hopeful promise that God fulfilled in the past; it is an announcement of what is truly happening in their midst. Jesus underscores this: "*Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing*" (Lk 4:21). Jesus is the Redeemer foretold by the prophet.

The "today" that Jesus speaks of in the Gospel is not merely a moment in time that occurred more than twenty centuries ago. Jesus also speaks to each of us "today," in the 21st century. Even now, the "anointed of the Lord" (the "Messiah," which is the Hebrew word translated as "anointed"), Jesus Christ, is alive and addresses each of us. He comes to heal our pains, weaknesses, and sins. Today can be a day of salvation for me and for each one of us. Let us not postpone until tomorrow the response the Lord expects from us "today": conversion, forgiveness and receiving forgiveness, starting anew

with the help of grace, total self-giving. Even the old pagan adage, *carpe diem*, offers us a valuable reminder: seize today—the day when God comes to meet you to heal and make you happy.

Today, God counts on our positive response to continue realizing the salvation Jesus brought for all humanity—for us—and to bring this salvation to the entire world.

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