

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY, 23 January 2022 – Epiphany 3

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Psalm 19

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
- 3 They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
- 4 Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world.
- 5 In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, ♦
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
- 6 It goes forth from the end of the heavens and runs to the very end again, ♦
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, ♦
sweeter also than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.
- 11 By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can tell how often they offend? ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
- 13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins lest they get dominion over me; ♦
so shall I be undefiled, and innocent of great offence.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, ♦
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

1 Corinthians 12.12–31a

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Luke 4.14–21

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

A Reflection from Peter...

Unity is surely a good thing. When you set it alongside disunity there's no doubt: it's certainly better for the family to be united about the choice of holiday destination than for everyone to be fighting for their own perfect holiday. Even if it means letting go of some of my hopes, unity brings a whole lot of other goods with it: peace, contentment, freedom to go on exploring and talking. But, like so many things, this is not a simple matter. Think of the very beginning of life. If a single cell did not divide and become two and then four and then eight – and on and on, there would be no new baby. Yet, when the baby is finally born it is one baby, one person – a unity of being. But again, as we grow, we find we are not always in a state of unity. Part of me wants to get up and get on with the day; part of me wants to stay in bed... St Paul struggles with all this in his first letter to the church at Corinth. He is talking about our unity in Christ and compares it to the human body. Yes, he says, a body has lots of parts, - arms, legs, eyes, head – but is still one body. In other words, he is helping us see that unity is not reducing everything to a single point, but embracing lots of different things that are meant to belong together, to work together. So it is, he says, with the church. Everyone baptised into Christ has a unique insight into the mystery of God, but the fullness of the church needs all those individual insights working together. The Christian Church in this county and the whole of Europe is facing extraordinary challenges and there is no doubt that disunity makes things more difficult. In this week of prayer for Christian Unity let's pay attention to our own reluctance to embrace the distinctive gift and insight of other Christians (and quite often it is just because we are cautious about change: "we've always done it like this!"). Then may we find ourselves excited about the possibilities that spring up when we are 'of one heart and one soul'. Indeed it is only when we are united with the mind of Christ that we can begin to be part of that great transformation that Jesus proclaims when he quotes the prophet Isaiah in our Gospel reading: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'