**3rd Sunday HOMILY, 2016**

**THEME:** PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

**READINGS**: Nehemiah 8: 2-6, 8-10/ Psalm 19/1 Cor. 12: 12-30/ Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Beloved, in the first reading the people of God assembled for hours listening to His Word. And in the gospel reading, Jesus Christ read from the book of the prophet Isaiah during a Sabbath liturgy. These passages remind us of the importance of the proclamation of the Word of God in the liturgy. I, therefore, wish to reflect on the importance of the HOMILY during the Holy Mass.

In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI used an imagery to describe the church in Africa – an imagery I find very appropriate in describing the Liturgy of the Word as well. The Pope said that the church in Africa is like the BREATHING LUNGS of the whole Church. Similarly, if we consider the Liturgy of the Eucharist as the HEART of the Holy Mass, then we could see the Liturgy of the Word as the BREATHING LUNGS of the Holy Mass. And in this light, a soul-inspiring homily could be seen as the FRESH BREATH – the ENERGIZING OXYGEN – which brings NEW LIFE into the whole Mass; for indeed, as the response to today’s Psalm says, the Word of God is LIFE.

Furthermore, the Word of God is RICH. Indeed, its worth cannot be measured. Thus, the psalmist says the Word is far more than gold. The Bible is therefore a **super-gold mine**; and using the grace of the **Holy Spirit as the miner’s lamp**, and employing **prayer, reading, meditation and writing as mining tools**, the preacher can extract the precious minerals of God’s message.

* **‘W’**, therefore, stands for the WEALTH of God’s WORD.
* ‘**O**’ stands for ORIENTATION: the word of God when received by faith gives a whole new ORIENTATION to our thinking and manner of life, for (says the psalmist), it is LIGHT to our path.
* **‘R’** stands for RELIABLE: the Word of God conveys to us the REVELATION of God in the most RELIABLE way; and so the preacher and hearers can fully rely on it.
* **‘D’** stands for DELIGHT. Thus, the psalmist says, God’s Word is sweeter than honey.

Anointed by the same Spirit who anointed Jesus to proclaim the GOOD NEWS, one can mine the WEALTH of God’s Word, and deliver it; then those who RELY on the Word would obtain a new ORIENTATION that may DELIGHT their souls.

Jesus Christ proclaimed GOOD NEWS (DELIGHT) to the poor. Similarly, well-prepared homilies could delight the poor in spirit. It could give them a delightful hope in God’s love and providence.

Jesus Christ proclaimed LIBERTY to CAPTIVES. Similarly, inspiring homilies could liberate those captured by fear, failure, sicknesses, etc. – delighting them in the end.

Jesus Christ proclaimed FREEDOM to the OPPRESSED. Similarly, those oppressed by sin and guilt could be delighted by an inspiring homily on God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Jesus Christ proclaimed recovery of sight to the blind. So an inspiring homily could enlighten those blinded by spiritual ignorance – delighting them in the Light of Christ: the Light of the World!

Jesus Christ proclaimed God’s YEAR OF FAVOUR. Similarly, an inspiring homily would convey to all the lasting JUBILEE of SALVATION in Jesus Christ!

In this way, when an inspiring homily conveys the GOOD NEWS to the poor, liberty to captives and the oppressed, sight to the blind and God’s favour to all, and the congregation says ‘amen’ at the end of the homily, the words of Jesus at the end of today’s gospel reading would resound (re-echo) in the hearts of all: ‘TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE HAS BEEN FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING’!