

Homily for 3rd Sunday year C

We all have a unique and wonderful identity—and it is only when we know who we are that we will be able to find our purpose and accomplish it. The dramatic scene presented in the Book of Nehemiah presents a people who had forgotten their identity and learned, as if for the first time, who they really are. The people had assembled and asked Ezra to read the law aloud to them. From morning until noon people stood and listened to Ezra read. They were hungry for the word of God. They were looking for inspiration. They wanted to know who they are and how to live. Are we like them today? Are we attentive to the Scriptures when they are read at Mass? Do we use internet to access the word of God and read passages that will build up our identity? We need to treasure the word of God and search the Scriptures often. Doing so, will lead us to a better quality of life. Since the Second Vatican Council much attention has been given to the role of the laity and the recognition of a variety of gifts in the life of the church. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians has played an important part in developing our understanding of our Christian calling and the fact that ‘One Spirit has been given to us all to drink.’ St Paul reminds us that each person is necessary to the Church. Everyone has his work to do, and no one can say that the contribution of one member is more important than others. *In a particular village, the villagers were engaged in building their Church. Everyone had their own contribution to make. While the work was in progress, a stranger came that way and he asked one of them, what is he doing. And he answered I am carrying the bricks, another said I am mixing the cement and the sand but a boy carrying the water said: I am building the Church.* This is the conviction we need to have in life. We are one body and each member compliments the others. Each of us is necessary to the body of Christ in the Church. We cannot underestimate the least member of the community.

The Gospel enumerates the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. Jesus states quite clearly what his objectives are. He will commit himself to a programme of liberation on all levels. In what way are we captives? Where do we need liberation or freedom? To be free we need to grow on the word of God. Jesus’ religious beliefs grew on the word of God. Through boyhood and family life, visits to the synagogue and prayer, he heard the word of God. Gradually he knew what it meant. Now was his time to speak that word, and to begin his ministry. For Mary and Joseph this was a proud moment. They had given their time and love to Jesus’ upbringing and now it would bear fruit. Today parents worry about the faith of their children. They find it difficult to convince them of their identity. *A boy with a monkey on his shoulder was walking down the road when he passed a policeman who said, "Now, now young lad, I think you had better take that monkey to the zoo." The next day, the boy was walking down the road with the monkey on his shoulder again, when he passed the same policeman. The policeman said, "Hey there, I thought I told you to take that money to the zoo!" The boy answered, "I did! Today I'm taking him to the cinema."* This danger attacks our generation. They see a different attitude to religion, prayer, morality and many other aspects of life. Much of the culture today goes against God and religion. Parents cannot fight the culture. But they can hand on the best of the gospel by their own faith and by the way they live their lives, by their love and by speaking the truth as they see it. What is handed on in faith is beyond words. Teachers and chaplains play a big role in handing on our faith. We are all part of the ‘faith ministry’ of Jesus. By our own prayer we can help a new generation find their way to faith. We hand over worries to the Lord. Prayer gives us the encouragement to support a younger generation in their ways of faith. God loves our younger generation more than we do!