

Homily

Sunday 3 (C)

27 January 2019

Do not be sad.. do not be mournful, do not weep.. The joy of the Lord is your stronghold.

The message of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The message of Pope Francis.

Pope Francis' first Apostolic Exhortation was *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel.

His Exhortation on the Family was *Amoris Laetitia*, the Joy of Love, and then, just last year *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Rejoice and be glad, an Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in today's world.

Imagine yourself in Nazareth. You are in the synagogue. A young man goes to the lectern to read. He unrolls the scroll and reads from the prophet Isaiah.

"The spirit of the Lord has been given to me....he has sent me to bring the good news to the poor...liberty to captives..... new sight to the blind."

You've heard this passage so many times before. But this time it is different. You can feel the atmosphere, the power surging through this young man standing before you. *All eyes ...were fixed on him.*

You are standing on holy ground. Something amazing has happened. You can't put it into words. All you can do is to bow down face to the ground, prostrate before the Lord. God is here. We are reduced to tears; not just tears of sorrow or compunction, but tears of deep emotion, of deep joy, of a deep love which completely overwhelms us.

There are lots of things in life that could drive us to despair. Bad things happen. The system grinds us down. People die. Our health fails.

Come back to Nazareth. Jesus is standing before you. He's not just telling you to look on the bright side of life. He is giving you himself. He is setting you free. He is becoming your life.

Ezra and Nehemiah had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Pope Francis has come to Rome from the ends of the world to rebuild the Church. Jesus is here, in our church, in our proclamation of Holy Scripture, in our Eucharist and Communion. Bow down before him. Cry those tears but do not be sad.

The joy of the Lord is your stronghold.

Fr Michael