

Monday week 22 of Ordinary time (Luke 4:16-30)

Today's Gospel is often referred to as the "Nazareth Manifesto," as coming at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry it sets out for all, who He is and what His mission is. Let's look at this event in context.

Luke's Gospel can be referred to as the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit" as His work is evident all the way through. In the Annunciation, Mary is told that the Holy Spirit would "overshadow" her (Lk. 1:35) in order for the Eternal Word, God the Son to be conceived as man in her womb. At Jesus' baptism, Luke records that the Holy Spirit "descended upon Him" (Lk. 3:22) which served to strengthen Him and confirm Him for His forthcoming ministry. Then fortified by the Holy Spirit, Jesus went into the desert to pray and discern His ministry. Part of that discernment process was working out what kind of Messiah He was to be, and we know that He was sorely tempted to follow the way of the Devil (Lk. 4:2-12). But guided and empowered by the Spirit, He returned to Galilee teaching and inspiring many (Lk. 4:14-15).

And so we come to today's Gospel. Jesus publicly declares in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Lk. 4:18) before describing His ministry and unpacking this to those present. At first, amazed, they admire His wisdom, but very quickly find his teaching hard to bear. "How dare He speak like this," they ask – "He is one of us!"

All the way through His ministry, Jesus' close relationship with His Father was sustained by the Spirit. His ministry was not always what other people had expected; they were expecting a political Messiah who would defeat the Romans and liberate Israel, but the liberation promised by Isaiah and fulfilled by Jesus Christ, was to be spiritual not political.

We too, baptised into Christ, have been filled with the Spirit. We too face temptations and need to call upon the Holy Spirit to give us strength to overcome them. We too can face both admiration and resilience from those closest to us. However, we must not forget the work of the Holy Spirit who led supported God the Son in His ministry, and who later led and inspired the Apostles in the earliest days of the Church. The Holy Spirit has continued to lead and inspire the whole Church (popes, bishops, priests, religious and lay men and women) through the ages. He works in us in our daily lives and the more open we are to His inspiration, the more we are able to cooperate with Him for the sake of our salvation and the salvation of other people.

"Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people, and kindle in them, the fire of your love."