



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend is the first Sunday Mass we celebrate in Ordinary Time (even though it's the "Second Sunday in Ordinary Time"... all last week, except last Sunday, was Ordinary Time). It doesn't mean "ho hum, just plain ordinary time," but rather time that is ordered, methodical. As such, we begin our walk with the Lord through His public ministry. Since we are in year C (of the three-year cycle: A, B, C), we are reading from the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus begins His public ministry by reading from the prophet Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

(Luke 4:18-19, see Isaiah 61:1-2)

This is Jesus' mission statement – it is what He is doing in our lives here and now, today. I've said this before, but it bears repeating: Jesus is the answer to all of our problems. Does this mean we won't have any problems if we follow Jesus? No. But it does mean that He is the way to get through every trouble or trial that we have. He will give meaning to our lives, which sometimes can feel empty and useless. He will give meaning to our suffering, which may seem only a hardship. When we turn to Jesus in our misery and trouble, He brings us to the Cross. But not just *to* the Cross – *through the Cross to the Resurrection!*

Jesus' purpose is to bring glad tidings to us. This means that despite COVID, despite inflation, despite anger and unrest, God has **Good News** for us!

Last week, I returned from being at Cenacolo in St. Augustine, FL (www.hopereborn.org). Most, if not all, of the men at Mary Immaculate House are there because of addiction – specifically drug addiction. Their community focusses on St. Benedict's *Ora et Labora* – prayer and work. They do much manual labor throughout the day, but they also spend time in adoration and they pray the rosary together three times a day. I was struck by the incredible transparency of this community – they share with each other what they need to work on – both giving and receiving. They learn to get "help" from others (correction or guidance) in a spirit of receptivity. After playing sports, they share if they had a reactions (pride, anger, anxiety, fear), and are committed to sharing this one on one and as a group. In my time with them, I saw men who had had profound conversions and freedom, as well as the newer men who still struggled day to day in their walk (the first day I was there, one of the new guys tried to run away; by the end of the week, he was smiling and enjoying himself).

I think about how Mother Elvira created Cenacolo as a place of encounter with Jesus the Healer. During this week in Florida, I saw how Jesus truly comes "to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."

If God can do this with men who have been addicted to drugs and alcohol for years or even decades, if God can do this for people who have fallen into the depths of despair, do you think that He would refuse to do it for us, as well? May we turn to the Lord, asking for Him to speak His words of Good News to us, here, today.