

Epiphany 3, 24/1/2016, Holy Trinity, Terrigal

Luke 4:14-21

Imagine that after you leave this place this morning you meet a friend who asks “What have you been doing this morning?”

What would be your reply? I have an idea that many would reply “I’ve been to church”.

This would seem to be in the same kind of way that Luke writes “When he (that is, Jesus) came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.”

But is it the same? I think not.

The synagogue is a building used by those of the Jewish Faith and those of that Faith were not called the synagogue.

The Church, however, is much more than a building that we use for worship, to receive pardon and to be fed and strengthened and renewed to be more fully what Church really is – the Body of Christ.

We proclaim this with considerable gusto later in this Eucharist and it is well to remember that we are not the entire Body of Christ.

However, we are not individuals outside of the Body.

We are individuals within the Body.

The portion of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Christians that was read this morning makes it quite clear that all together we, the Church, are “the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

He continues by likening the Body of Christ to a human body with comments about ear, hand, foot, eye, nose and head and how each has a special function that enables the whole human body to operate and serve its purpose.

It is important that we in this parish remember this as we come to a new incumbency with Fr. Mark as rector and each of us being prepared to make our contribution to the Church by finding a ministry that suits us and complements the others.

We also need to remember that these ministries are not confined to this congregation but to be exercised wherever we are in our daily lives.

This is because we are individuals within the Body of Christ wherever we are in our daily lives, where every person is important,

where “we were all baptized into the one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.”

Paul insists that each person is indispensable.

The weakest is just as indispensable as the strongest for all are important in the Body of Christ.

We, the Body of Christ, are the continuing presence and activity of Jesus Christ in the world.

We, the Church, the Body of Christ, are the means by which Christ remains involved in the world, this broken, fragmented and fearful world because of the threat of extremism, selfishness and greed.

We, his body, are his representatives on earth.

This is not a fan club that you can join for a while and get out of when things don't go your way.

This is the Body of Christ in which Jesus challenges us to actively serve as Christ's continuing presence in the world.

“To do what,” you ask?

This is where to-day's Gospel comes into it.

In this reading we see the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

We read that Jesus, reading from Isaiah, said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me -- to bring good news to the poor – to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.”

Now substitute ‘us’ for ‘me’ and we have the Body of Christ, including you and me individually using our ministry to include all who are oppressed and individuals in our communities who need freedom and salvation, who need such good news, such peace as Christ brings.

With Australia Day looming before us our wish should be that every Australian should be open to and listen to God speaking to them to bring to their lives peace, freedom and love through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the core activity of Christ's community, of us, knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us.