

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 26, 2025

In All Things, Jesus Makes the Difference

Imagine a young man who grew up in a small town, humble and unassuming. Years later, he returns as a celebrated figure—perhaps a successful author, athlete, or entrepreneur. The townspeople gather to hear him speak, proud of their local boy who has “made it.” But imagine their shock if his words challenge their expectations, speaking truths that are difficult to hear. Their pride might turn to confusion or even anger. How could someone they thought they knew so well say such things?

This is a glimpse of what happened when Jesus returned to Nazareth. In the synagogue, surrounded by those who had known him since childhood, Jesus stood to read from the scroll of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” When he finished, Jesus declared, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

The congregation was stunned. Could this be true? Could the young carpenter they had watched grow up claim to fulfill this profound prophecy? They had expected the Messiah to establish a powerful political kingdom, liberating them from Roman oppression. Instead, Jesus announced a kingdom rooted in goodness, love, and spiritual freedom. He came to address the deeper, universal captivities such as cruelty, despair, and injustice. His words upended their expectations, and many struggled to accept them.

Jesus's message is as relevant now as it was then. As Pope Francis beautifully reminds us: “The Word of God is always ‘today.’ When you read the Word of God, a ‘today’ begins in your soul, if you understand it well.” The prophecy Jesus fulfilled in Nazareth wasn't merely an event in history; it is alive in every moment, including this very one.

Jesus isn't just a historical figure or a distant concept. He is real. He is “I Am.” He is present in every aspect of our lives, speaking through events, people, and even the quiet of our hearts. As theologian Peter Kreeft notes in his book, *Food for the Soul*, Jesus is speaking to us in all things. Are we listening?

When we open our hearts to Jesus, we allow his kingdom of goodness to take root within us. Jesus makes the difference—not in abstract ways but tangibly, transforming our lives and calling us to be part of his mission to heal the world. Today, as we reflect on his words, let us embrace the challenge and the grace of listening to his voice. Let his “today” begin anew in us.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy