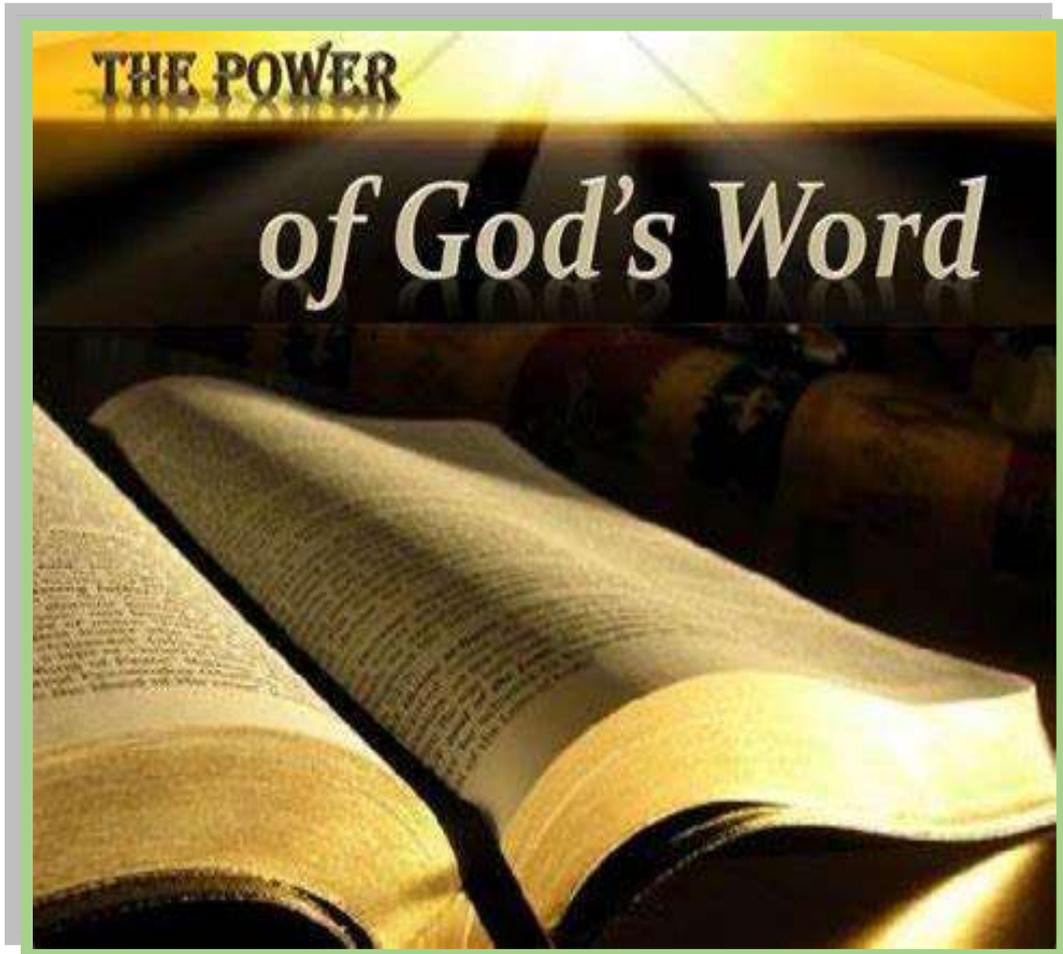


RESOURCES FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B) January 24, 2021

On September 30, 2019, on the liturgical memorial of St. Jerome, Pope Francis announced that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time would, in future, be celebrated as the **Sunday of the Word of God**.

In the Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass, we are reminded of the role of the Word of God in the life of the Church: In the hearing of God's word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God's wonderful, past works in the history of salvation are presented anew as mysterious realities.

God in turn makes use of the Congregation of the Faithful that celebrates the Liturgy in order that His Word may speed on and be glorified and that His Name be exalted among the nations.

Whenever, therefore, the Church, gathered by the Holy Spirit for liturgical celebration, announces and proclaims the Word of God, she is aware of being a new people in whom the covenant made in the past is perfected and fulfilled.

Baptism and Confirmation in the Spirit have made all Christ's faithful into messengers of God's word because of the grace of hearing they have received. They must therefore be the bearers of the same word in the Church and in the world, at least by the witness of their lives.

The Word of God proclaimed in the celebration of God's mysteries does not only address present conditions but looks back to past events and forward to what is yet to come. Thus, God's word shows us what we should hope for with such a longing that in this changing world our hearts will be set on the place where our true joys lie (Preamble, 7).

The attached pages provide a wide variety of resources to help you, your diocese, and your parishes to celebrate this day more fully. As Saint Paul in his letter to the Colossians (3:16) says "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16)

PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS

Celebrating the Sunday of the Word of God

In *Aperuit illis* (§3), Pope Francis suggests the following ways to celebrate the Sunday of the Word of God:

- Enthroned the sacred text.
- Highlight the proclamation of the Word of the Lord.
- Emphasise the honour due to the word of God in the homily.
- Celebrate the Rite of Installation of Lectors or a commissioning of Readers.
- Provide training for Readers.
- Give a Bible, or one of its books, to everyone.
- Encourage people to read and pray with Scripture daily, especially through the practice of *lectio divina*.

What is the Word of God?

We often identify the Bible as the Word of God. This is not wrong, but God speaks to our hearts in many different ways. For instance, he speaks to us in prayer and through our conscience, and often through other people. Hence, the Word of God covers much more than a printed book. Nevertheless, the Bible is the privileged collection of communications between God and his people. These stories and poems have nourished the lives of the people of Israel and the Christian Church right through the centuries, and they continue to nourish us today. They tell the story of God's love and our salvation from ancient times onwards. The scriptural texts offer us both challenge and encouragement for our lives, and are especially valuable to us through the hope they offer us at dark moments.

The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit was at work in the whole process of the formation of the Scriptures. This is why, even though many people across different times and places contributed to the writing, we believe that the Scriptures are divinely inspired. But the Holy Spirit's work does not come to an end with the writing of the text. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us by virtue of our baptism, is also at work in us as we listen to the text. Therefore, through the Spirit's inspiration, the words of Scripture can become a living Word of the Lord to us here and now.

Enthronement of the Word of God in a Liturgical Setting

In paragraph 3 of *Aperuit illis*, Pope Francis requests that "the various communities will find their own ways to mark this Sunday with a certain solemnity. It is important, however, that in the Eucharistic celebration the sacred text be enthroned, in order to focus the attention of the assembly on the normative value of God's word".

It is hard to see how enthronement of the Word might take place within the celebration of the Eucharist. What is perhaps envisaged here is that attention is given to the carrying of the Book of the Gospels in the procession at the start of the celebration, and that it be then placed on the altar. During the procession, the Book is raised, and can be seen by the congregation. During the singing of the Alleluia, a solemn procession with candles and incense accompanies the Book of the Gospels to the ambo where it is incensed, honoured, and kissed. The lectionary should never be carried in this way.

Enthronement of the Word of God in a Domestic Setting

Families might like to be given the opportunity of doing this in their homes.

To show that God is at the centre of their lives, many families enthrone the Bible, the Word of God, in a visible place in their homes. By placing the Sacred Scriptures in a prominent place decorated with flowers and art, and by gathering at this spot for daily prayer, families show that God is present and active through his Word.

Enthroning the Bible in your home is easy to do. Simply pick a place where the Bible can be honoured. The Bible should be placed where it will be seen regularly, but removed from the noise and confusion of the family entertainment centre. Place the Bible, opened to a favourite passage or the readings of the day, on a table or shelf. Decorate the area around the Bible with a cloth, flowers, and/or a candle—whatever makes sense to you. Use the following ritual prayer when you gather as a family to enthrone the Bible.

Things to prepare:

Bible

A shelf or table where the Bible will be placed (the shelf may be adorned with a cloth and candles)

When possible, the ritual may start outside the main door to the house or the main entrance to the room. One member of the family holds the Bible, raised slightly. The father, mother, or other leader begins the celebration with the Opening Litany.

Leader: Our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Word of the Father. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You became one with us to tell of the Father's love. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You are the light that shines in the darkness. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You save us from fear and break the bonds of sin and death. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You come to guide our steps and lead us to God. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You are the Word of eternal Life. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You fill us with the Holy Spirit. **R/** Come, Lord Jesus, come.

As everyone enters the house or room, they may sing a suitable song.

Then Scripture is read from the Bible:

Matthew 4:17-23 *Jesus calls and heals through the power of his Word.*

Mark 4:1-20 *The Word is like the seed.*

Luke 4:14-21 *Jesus proclaims the Word in Nazareth.*

John 1:10-14 *Jesus, the Word of God and the light of the world.*

After the reading, the leader places the Bible in the place prepared for it. All bow deeply before the enthroned Bible.

Leader:

We have heard your words, Jesus.
They give us joy and bring light and truth into our lives.
Your presence gives us peace in our troubled and divided world.
Let your Word create in our hearts a deep desire for you.
Be with us in our hearts and homes, in our community and country.
Give us your Holy Spirit to help us to understand your Word.
We enthrone now this Holy Bible in our midst.
Make your Word the centre of our lives.
May your Word inspire all that we think and say and do.
May your Word bind us together in unity with each other and with you.
Today and forever. R. Amen.

All join in praying the Lord's Prayer.

All repeat after the leader:

We promise to respect the Word of God in our midst.	(Repeat)
We shall read and reflect on it as a family of God.	(Repeat)
May we draw from it inspiration for our decisions, strength for our work, and comfort in suffering.	(Repeat)
Jesus, help us to be faithful to our promise, you who live forever and ever.	(Repeat)
Amen.	

The celebration concludes with a sign of peace.

Blessing of Readers

The ministry of Reader in a parish community could well be highlighted on this Sunday. Perhaps a formation session might be organised during this week for readers; new readers could be recruited; or those who have served the community as readers could renew their commitment and new readers begin their ministry. As always, formation for this, or indeed any ministry, is crucial. A parish could have a commissioning of ministers of the Word during the Sunday Eucharist, or may decide to have a prayer of blessing.

After the Prayer of the Faithful, the readers are blessed by the Parish Priest. They may be asked to bring their Bibles with them to Mass.

With hands extended over the new readers, the celebrant says immediately:

Priest: Everlasting God, when he read in the synagogue at Nazareth,
your Son proclaimed the good news of salvation for which he would give up his life.

Bless these readers.
As they proclaim your words of life, strengthen their faith
that they may read with conviction and boldness,
and put into practice what they read.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Commissioning Ministers of the Word

After the Homily, those to be commissioned (or re-commissioned) as parish Readers are presented to the people in these or similar words:

Priest: Dear Friends in Christ,

These parishioners are given the great privilege of proclaiming God's Word in the Assembly. Through them, God will speak to his people of the salvation and redemption won for them by the Lord Jesus, so that, nourished by this word, the people will grow in the love and the knowledge of God.

You have been called to proclaim the Word of God in the assembled community of God's people, and in so doing you are sharing in the Church's mission to preach the Good News to all peoples. May God's Word be living and active in your lives, that you may worship the living God in spirit and in truth. In proclaiming God's word to others, accept it yourself in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Meditate on it constantly, so that each day you will have a deeper love for the Scriptures, and in all you say and do, show forth to the world our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

After the address, the candidates stand before the celebrant who asks them these questions:

Are you willing to act as a Minister of the Word and to proclaim God's word to the people assembled in this Church? (I am)

Are you willing to prepare each proclaiming of God's word by study and prayer? (I am)

The celebrant then asks each reader to place their one hand on the Bible they have brought and prays:

Priest: *Let us pray to God our loving Father and ask him to bless our brothers and sisters chosen to proclaim His Word:*

God our Father, you have given our brothers and sisters faith in you and in your living word. We ask you to help them grow in that faith as they meditate on your word, so that they may worthily proclaim the word to the assembly, and by the manner of their lives. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

General Intercessions

Introduction:

Gathered as the people of God, sustained by the Word of God, and called to be disciples of Christ, together let us pray:

For the Church: that rooted in the Word of God, we may continue to build up the Body of Christ and promote the common good. **Lord hear us. R/. Lord graciously hear us.**

For Christian leaders: that they walk in the ways of the Lord and encourage others to do the same. **Lord hear us. R/. Lord graciously hear us.**

For peace among nations: that God would inspire light to shine on all parts of the world that know the darkness of division and war.
Lord hear us. R/. Lord graciously hear us.

For all who teach and preach the Word of God: that their words may renew the faith of those who listen and encourage them to trust in the promise of God.
Lord hear us. R/. Lord graciously hear us.

For this community: that we may have an ever-greater openness to the Word of God and allow it to enlighten the darkness of our hearts and free us to follow Jesus evermore faithfully.
Lord hear us. R/. Lord graciously hear us.

For healing between Christian churches and communities: that God will free us from past rivalries and wounds, so that all Christians may work together in serving Christ who calls us to be one.
Lord hear us. R/. Lord graciously hear us.

Where readers are blessed, the concluding prayer of the Prayer of the Faithful is the prayer of blessing as given above.

