

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION
SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD



SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Liturgical-Pastoral Resource 2020



ST PAULS

*Thanks are expressed to Mons. Antonio Pitta
for the exegetical comment on Mt 4:12-23.*

Picture Sources:

Cover: The Osservatore Romano.

Giuseppe Lacerenza: pag. 4/5, 42, 44/45, 49, 55, 61,
69, 70, 78, 82, 84.

Giacomo Perego: pag. 6, 13, 14, 27, 52, 66, 92.

Edizioni San Paolo: pag. 17, 20, 24, 31.

Shutterstock.com: pag. 10/11 (GoneWithTheWind),
19 (Riccardo De Luca - Update),
23 (Jantanee Runpranomkorn), 32 (Frippitaun),
37 (GYG Studio), 40/41 (Prostock-studio),
65 (Andrey_Popov), 75 (Konstantin Christian),
81 (Dream Perfection), 86 (Chat Karen Studio),
88 (Colombo Nicola).

The Publisher is available to those asking reserved
rights not found.

© EDIZIONI SAN PAOLO s.r.l., 2020
Piazza Soncino, 5 - 20092 Cinisello Balsamo (Milano)
www.edizionisanpaolo.it
Distribuzione: Diffusione San Paolo s.r.l.
Piazza Soncino, 5 - 20092 Cinisello Balsamo (Milano)

Per i testi del Papa © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Attached to *Credere* this week
Site Manager: Antonio Rizzolo
Weekly registered at the Court
of Alba il 23/10/2012 n. 4/12

Poste Italiane S.p.A.
S.A.P. – D.L. 353/2003 L. 27/02/04 N. 46 – a.1 c.1 DCB/CN

© PERIODICI SAN PAOLO s.r.l., 2020
via Giotto 36, 20145 Milano
www.credere.it

Finished printing in December 2019
Printing: Mediagraf SpA
Noventa Padovana (Padova)

Introduction

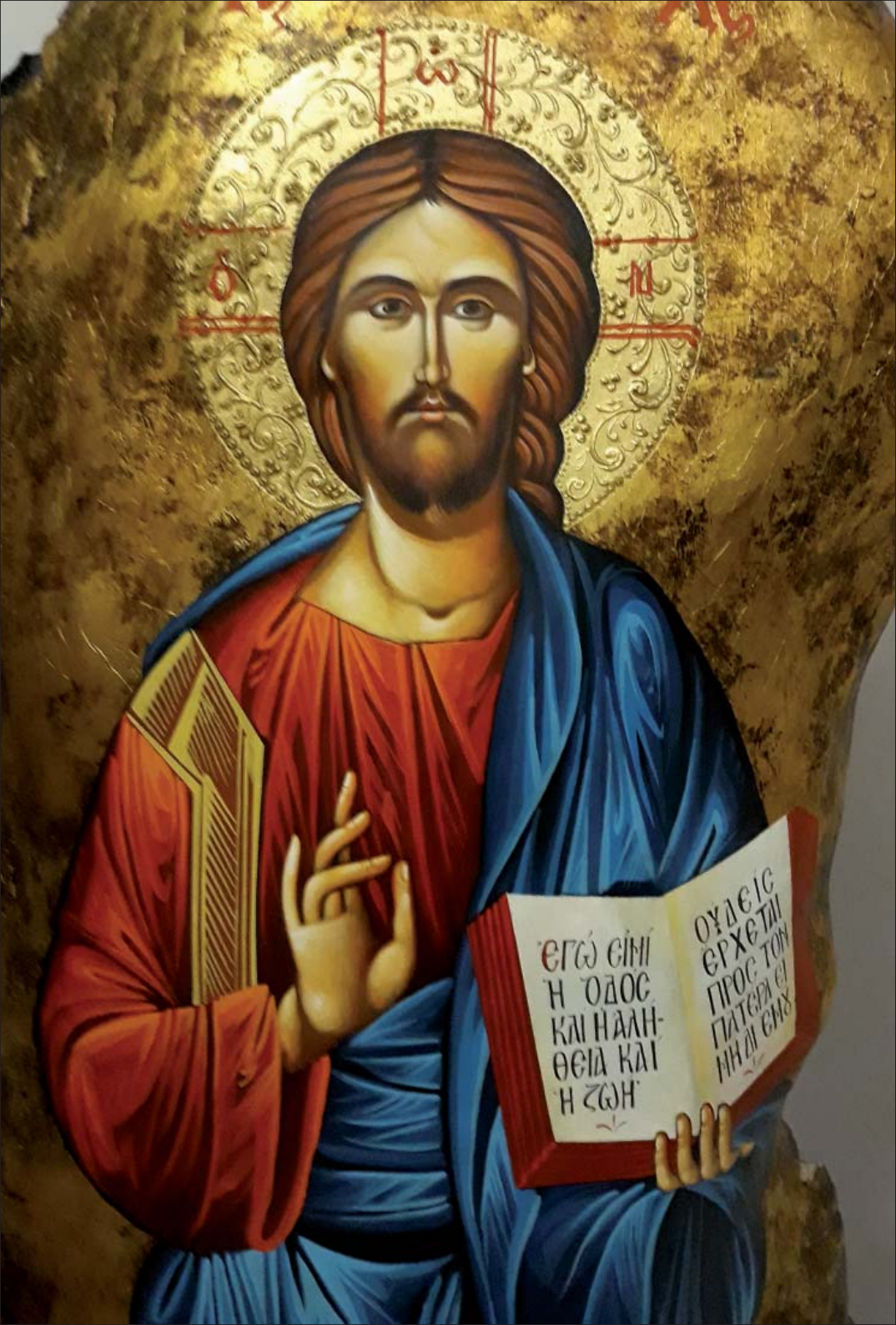
“The various communities will find their own ways to mark
this Sunday with a certain solemnity”.

Pope Francis’ words in the letter *Aperuit illis*, which establishes
the Sunday of the Word of God, help us to understand the
importance of this Pastoral Resource. This resource has been
prepared for parish communities and those who gather for the
Sunday celebration of the Holy Eucharist, so they may live
this Sunday more intensely. We need to make the Eucharistic
celebration a real time of encounter, where believers know they
are called by the Spirit to celebrate together the mystery of the
death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Listening to the Word
of God it is a good that sheds light on the path of our life and
allows us to be fed by the Word and by the Body and Blood of
Christ, supporting and strengthening us to be witnesses in the
world.

This resource can help meet these needs and, perhaps, help make
the Eucharistic celebration a solemn occasion for rediscovering
the joy of celebrating the mystery of our salvation as a believing
people.

✠ *Rino Fisichella*





What is the Sunday of the Word of God?

“I greatly desire that God’s word be increasingly celebrated, known and disseminated...(*Misericordia et misera*, 7). With these words at the end of the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis encouraged the Church to put Sacred Scripture ever more at the centre of her life and its pastoral activity. Moreover, the Word of God possesses that “dynamism” and is “unpredictable in its power” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 20:22), able to speak to the heart of man to help him discover and encounter the merciful love of God (*Evangelii gaudium*, 128). For this reason, in his Apostolic Letter at the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy, the Holy Father hoped that “every Christian community, on one Sunday of the liturgical year, could renew its efforts to make the Sacred Scriptures better known and more widely diffused. It would be a Sunday given over entirely to the Word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people” (*Misericordia e misera*, 7).

Throughout the world, for years now and with great response from the faithful, a Sunday or a certain time of the year has been dedicated to the Bible: “It is now common for the Christian community to set aside moments to reflect on the

great importance of the Word of God for everyday living. The various local Churches have undertaken a wealth of initiatives to make the Sacred Scripture more accessible to believers, to increase their gratitude for so great a gift, and to help them to strive daily to embody and bear witness to its teachings” (*Aperuit illis*, 2). Responding to the many requests he received, so that the whole Church, with its great wealth of traditions and local initiatives, can walk together and in “unity of purpose”, Pope Francis, with the Apostolic Letter *Aperuit illis*, established a Sunday of the liturgical year dedicated to Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church: the *Sunday of the Word of God*. Each year the third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted “to the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God” (*Aperuit illis*, 3).

It is no coincidence that the Holy Father chose to sign the Letter on September 30, 2019, the liturgical memorial of St. Jerome, which marks the 1600th anniversary of the death of this important translator and commentator of Scripture, to which we owe the expression: “*Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ*”.

Sacred Scripture has always been a bridge for dialogue and an important bond with other Christian denominations and with other religions. It is significant, from this point of view, that the *Sunday of the Word of God* has been chosen to take place at a time in which the Church celebrates the *Day of dialogue between Jews and Catholics* and the *Week of Christian Unity*, giving it great ecumenical value and communion (*Aperuit illis*, 3). Among other things, the

Gospels for this Sunday, in all three the liturgical cycles, speak of the beginning of the ministry and preaching of Jesus, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14).

In every local situation, the most suitable and effective ways can be planned to live this Sunday in the best way possible, helping “The People of God grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures. For as the sacred author taught of old: ‘This word is very near to you: it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance’ (Dt 30:14)” (*Aperuit illis*, 15).



THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

- ◆ “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body” (*Dei Verbum*, 21).
- ◆ When we proclaim the Word, we carry out an ecclesial act: we do not do anything on our own, but participate in the mission of the Church, of which we are part.
- ◆ “The Bible cannot be just the heritage of some, much less a collection of books for the benefit of a privileged few. It belongs above all to those called to hear its message and to recognize themselves in its words” (*Aperuit illis*, 4).
- ◆ It is important to understand the various elements and gestures that are directed towards the Word of God in the liturgical celebration in order to live it to the fullest.

I “The “places” and the “books” of the Word of God

One of the main purposes of the Sunday of the Word of God is to regain familiarity with the Holy Scriptures. In fact, the Christian community is built upon and is recognized by it: “Regular reading of Sacred Scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist make it possible for us to see ourselves as part of one another” (*Aperuit illis*, 8). For this, it is necessary to inhabit all those “places” in which the Word of God is encountered, and to know the books that bring out its importance within the celebration.

The place: the ambo

The importance of Sacred Scripture, affirmed by Vatican II Council, certainly extends to the place where it is proclaimed. The introduction to the Order of the Readings for Mass states that the place of the Word must correspond to its dignity and points to the relationship to the altar. At Mass, it must be clear that the table of the *Word of God* and of the *Body of Christ* is prepared. The ambo reminds us of the altar in that the Word proclaimed from the ambo is made “flesh” on the altar. We can rightly speak of “two tables”: that of the Word and that of the Eucharist. The biblical ancestor of our present-day ambo could be the wooden pulpit that Ezra built for the solemn reading of the Law, for the Feast of Booths around the year 445 BC. In the Book of Nehemiah we read: “And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden pulpit which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood and Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it





all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground” (Ne 8:4-6). Ezra stood on a pulpit, built specifically to express the dignity that the Word possesses when it is proclaimed. “He was above”: it is not just a logistical need (to be seen and heard by everyone); it also has a symbolic importance: God speaks with His Word that is above ours and must descend into hearts.

Thus, we read at the beginning of the Roman Missal: “The dignity of the Word of God requires that the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word. It is appropriate that this place be ordinarily a stationary ambo and not simply a movable lectern. The ambo must be located in keeping with the design of each church in such a way that the ordained ministers and lectors may be clearly seen and heard by the faithful. From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 309).

The books: The Lectionary and The Book of the Gospels

In the Word, the Risen Christ becomes truly present among his own and gives the Spirit for the glorification of the Father. In the celebration, the presence of the Lord is highlighted by the honour that is given to the holy book and in particular to the Book of the Gospels. All this is to express a marvellous reality: through the Word that is proclaimed, in the Church, a true “epiphany” of the Lord occurs among those who listen to it,

who, putting it into practice, grow in faith and celebrate the paschal mystery of Christ. For this, proclaiming the Word takes on the value of a salvific event, in which the history of salvation is realized. The proclamation is not a simple reading of the text, but rather the announcement of a presence. In the proclamation, God makes his saving work known. The proclamation attests that reference is always made to an event, which highlights the origin and the characteristic of being a gift received. The Word of God is always the event of an encounter, which creates life and establishes a relationship.

The Lectionary

The Lectionary is the liturgical book that contains all of the Word of God proclaimed in Eucharistic celebrations. The book, a liturgical sign of higher realities, must be worthy, decorous and beautiful, apt to exalt the sense of God that speaks to his people, worthy of being kissed. For this reason, no substitute pastoral aids are suitable for the proclamation of the Word of God, such as “leaflets”, which should be given to the faithful only for the preparation and personal meditation of the readings. Likewise, the liturgical book should be like the epiphany of God’s beauty in the midst of his people. The Lectionary, unlike the Book of the Gospels, not only contains the Gospel readings, but also texts from the Old and New Testament. In the absence of the Book of the Gospels, the following five volumes can be used: Sunday and Festive Lectionary, Weekday Lectionary, Lectionary of the Saints, Lectionary for Ritual Masses, Lectionary for Votive Masses and Special Circumstances.

The Book of the Gospels

The Missal specifies that the Book of the Gospels be placed on the altar before the proclamation of the Gospel. It is placed

on the altar at the beginning of the celebration by the deacon (or by the acolyte in the absence of the deacon), after having been carried in the entrance procession. Among the processions that take place during the Eucharistic celebration, the one with the Book of the Gospels should be the most solemn as it has the purpose of glorifying Christ in his Word and of acclaiming his presence. Being placed on the altar gives the Book of the Gospels an exceptional honour. Since the altar is Christ himself, only the Eucharist and the Gospels enjoy the privilege of being placed on it. When the priest or the deacon pick up the Book of the Gospels from the altar, the meaning is that the words read later are not theirs, but those of Jesus, Lord of history and of the Church. The Book of the Gospels contains the Gospel passages to be proclaimed during the celebrations. The texts are usually arranged according to the order in which they appear in the Gospels, already divided by pericopes to be proclaimed.



The “gestures” towards The Word of God

The privileged place of encounter between the Christian community and the Word of God is the Eucharistic celebration. Hence, it is important to restore the dignity and attention that are due to it, both through enthronement and incensing. In the same way, there can be a ritual for giving the Bible at the end of the celebration. In order for this to be even more evident on the Sunday of the Word of God, it is important that, within the celebrations, some “gestures” be made to make the importance visible to all (see *Aperuit illis*, 3).

Reception of the Word

In the First Letter to the Thessalonians Saint Paul highlights the importance of the correct reception of the Word: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1Ts 2:13).

During the solemn entrance hymn, the deacon carries the Book of the Gospels in procession, keeping it slightly raised. Once in the presbytery, he places it on the altar. In the absence of the deacon, a concelebrant can do the same thing. This gesture, reserved for the sacred text, is intended to express our inner disposition: the Word of God comes to us from above, lights our way and takes the central place in the assembly. The respect shown to the Book of the Gospels reflects the importance that the Word of God has in the community and in each of us.



Enthronement of the Word of God

Once at the altar, the Book of the Gospels is placed in the centre. This placing corresponds to an enthronement and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The tradition of placing the Book of the Gospels on a throne started during the great Ecumenical Councils to accentuate the primacy of the Word of God. This liturgical practice is also done at Christmas time to highlight the Mystery of the Incarnation. The enthronement expresses



the primacy of the Word in the lives of believers who guide and shape all their activities according to the instructions spoken by God.

Proclamation of the Word

As recommended by the post-synodal exhortation *Verbum Domini*, it is good to take the utmost care in proclaiming the Word of God. This is the first sign of our respect for the Bible. “As is known, while the Gospel is proclaimed by a priest or deacon, in the Latin tradition the **first and second readings** are proclaimed by an appointed reader, whether a man or a woman. (...). All those entrusted with this office, even those not instituted in the ministry of Reader, should be truly suitable and carefully trained. This training should be biblical and liturgical, as well as technical: The purpose of their *biblical* formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith central point of the revealed message. The *liturgical* formation ought to equip readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the liturgy of the word and the significance of its connection with the liturgy of the Eucharist.

The *technical* preparation should make the readers skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment” (*Verbum Domini*, 58). As a rule, **the psalm** should be sung at the ambo. There are two ways of singing a psalm: *the direct mode*, in which the psalm is sung by the psalmist or by a cantor without a response, or by everyone all together; the *responsorial mode* is preferred in the Eucharistic celebration. The psalmist or a singer intones the verses of the psalm and the whole community participates with the response. This responsorial form has several variations: the psalmist can sing the psalm and the assembly sings the response;

the reader proclaims the psalm and the community sings the response or the refrain; the reader proclaims the psalm and the assembly recites the response. This last variation is the least correct, even though it is the most common.

Proclamation of the Gospel

The proclamation of the Gospel must be given maximum attention; therefore, it should be preceded by incensing. During the “Acclamation before the Gospel”, the censer-bearer goes to the chair, for infusing the incense; he then goes with the deacon or the presider, to the ambo for the incensation and for the proclamation. It would be good to sing the greeting and the initial proclamation: “From the Gospel ...” (and the final one “The Word of the Lord”) to emphasize the importance of what is read. If the celebration is presided over by the bishop, at the end of the proclamation, the priest or deacon will bring the Book of the Gospels to the bishop to kiss. On this occasion, it is good if the celebrant also imparts the blessing to the people.

The gesture of veneration

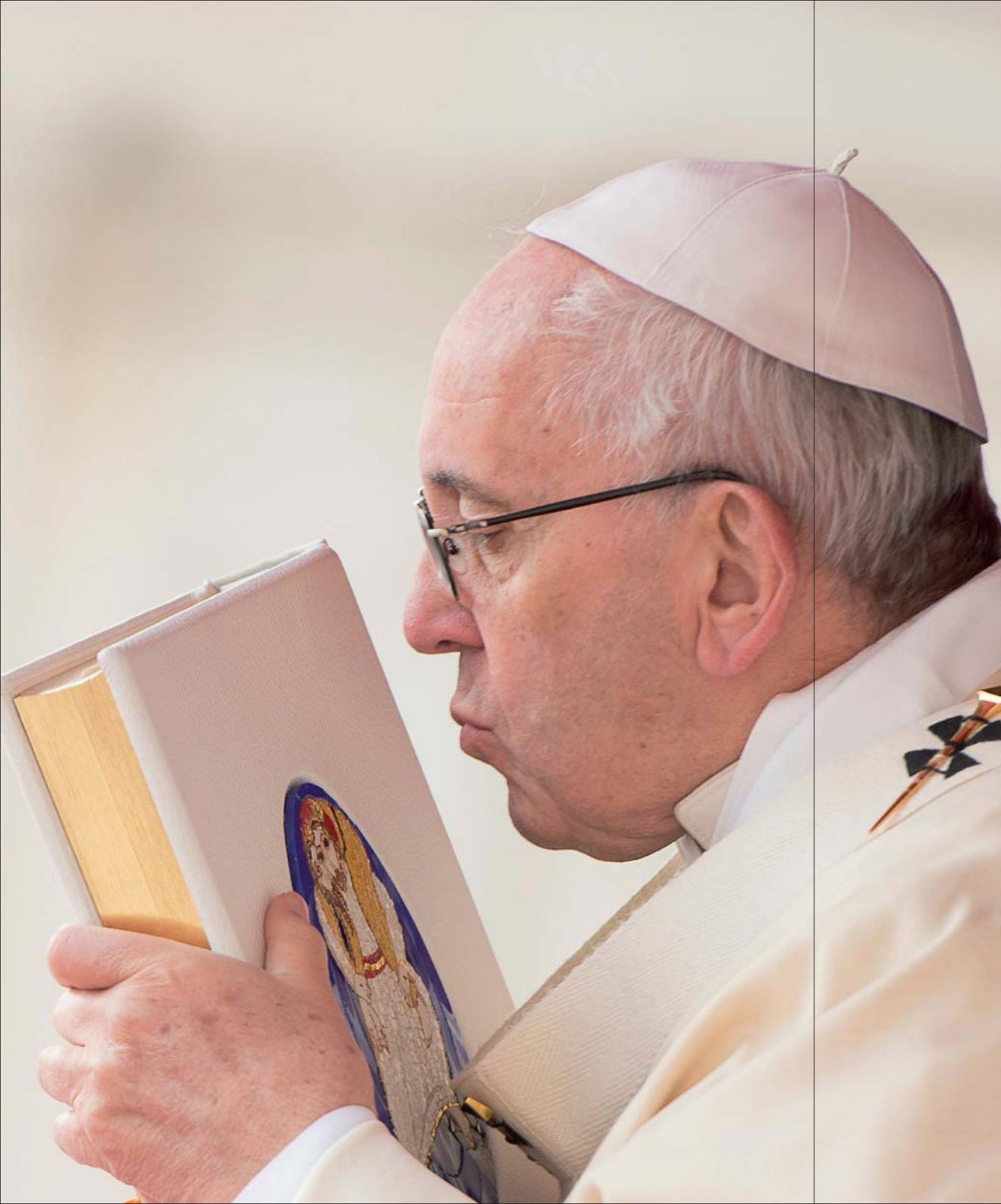
In order to emphasize the centrality of the Holy Book, after the proclamation of the Gospel, the faithful can be invited to express a gesture of veneration. Before being put back on the ambo, the Book of the Gospels is presented for the veneration of the faithful. A kiss, a bow, a hand resting on the page of the Gospel ... can express the veneration of the faithful, while the choir sings a suitable song.

Giving the Bible

Giving the Bible to the faithful is an act of entrusting, in which the Word of God is put into the hands of men and women, who from now on are responsible for receiving it and spreading it. To pass it on, you must first receive it. It will therefore be “an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly” (St. Augustine, *Serm.* 179, 1).

At the time of giving, the believer takes on the responsibility to read, to listen to the Word of God and to transmit it with his/her own words and the works of daily life: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Lk 11:28).





THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS

- ◆ Sacred Scripture is not meant to remain a “dead letter” but, on the contrary, it must become alive in the actions and daily life of the Church.
- ◆ Thus, we read in *Aperuit illis*:
“We frequently risk separating sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition, without understanding that together they are the one source of Revelation.
- ◆ The written character of the former takes nothing away from its being fully a living word; in the same way, the Church’s living Tradition, which continually hands that word down over the centuries from one generation to the next, possesses that sacred book as the “supreme rule of her faith” (n. 11).
- ◆ Below we give a few ideas taken from the priceless treasure given to us by the Fathers of the Church and by the Magisterium, in particular those from the last three Popes.

How to receive the Word of God?

The voice of the Fathers of the Church

I am doing my duty, in obedience to Christ's command: "Search the scriptures" (Jn 5:39), and "ask and you will find" (Mt 7:7) so Christ will not say to me what he said to the Jews: "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt 22:29). For if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.

Jerome, Prologue to the commentary of the Prophet Isaiah

The doctrine of the Church - which is the house of God - is found in the fullness of the divine Books. [...] What other life could there be, if we exclude the science of Scripture? It is thanks to it that we come to know Christ, which is the life of those who believe!

Jerome, Letter 30, 7

Remember that there is only one discourse of God that is throughout the whole of Scripture and only one is the Word, that resounds in the mouth of all sacred writers, who being in the beginning God with God, does not know syllabication because He is outside of time, and we should not marvel, if, due to our weakness, He stooped down to pronounce our words, when He stooped down to assume the very weakness of our bodies.

Augustine, Expositions on the Psalms, 103, 4, 1



No one doubts that Sacred Scripture, that is the whole of the books of the Law, of the Prophets, of the Gospels and of the Apostolic writings, to whom canonical authority is acknowledged, in some of its parts, the sole aim is to nourish science and give solid foundations to faith....Other texts instead contain precepts to be observed and to put into practice and or prohibitions to do this or that action... and establish norms for a moral life in conformity with the needs of true religion.

Augustine, *Preface to the View of the Moral Precepts of Sacred Scripture*

Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbour, does not yet understand them as he ought.

Augustine, *The Christian Doctrine* 1, 36, 40

Behold how you should understand Scripture: like the only and perfect body of the Word.

Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*, 39

It is said that we drink the blood of Christ not only when we receive it according to the rite of the sacred mysteries (the Eucharist), but also, when we receive His words in which reside life, as He himself says, *'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.'*

Origen, *Homily on Numbers* 16, 9,

You, therefore, put all your zeal in the reading of Scriptures, with faith and with the good will that is pleasing to God. However, it is not enough to knock and to search. In fact, what is indispensable, above all, to obtain the understanding of divine things, is prayer.

Origen, *Letter to Gregory the Miracle Worker*, 4, 3

In these two angels, we can still recognize the two Testaments: one that precedes, the other that follows. These angels are in-

deed connected to each other by the place occupied by the body of the Lord: since the two Testaments agree to announce an incarnated Lord, dead and risen, it is as if the Old Testament sat at the head, and the New at the feet. This is why the two cherubim who cover [their wings] the mercy seat look at each other, face to face (Ex 25, 20). Cherub means "fullness of knowledge". What can the two cherubim symbolize, if not the two Testaments? As for the mercy seat, he represents the incarnate Lord, of whom John declares: "He is a propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn 2: 2). The Old Testament announces what must be done by the Lord, and the New proclaims it, when done. They are like the two cherubim: they look at each other turning their faces towards the mercy seat. For because they see the incarnate Lord placed between them, their looks are in harmony, since they agree in all that they relate of the mystery of his plan of salvation.

Gregory the Great, *Homily 25 on the Gospels*

If the words of Scripture had only one sense, then the first interpreter would have been able to explain them; and for rest there would have no work or joy of discovery. Instead, each of the Lord's words has its form and each form has many parts, and each of the parts has many characters and forms of their own. Each person therefore understands what they are capable of and interprets according to what they have received.

Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, 7, 22

For it is one thing to have a ready tongue and elegant language, and quite another to penetrate into the very heart and marrow of heavenly utterances and to gaze with pure eye of the soul on profound and hidden mysteries; for this can be gained by no learning of man's, nor condition of this world, only by purity of soul, by means of the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

St. John Cassian, *Conference 14*, 9,7

You must then, if you want to get at the true knowledge of the Scriptures, endeavor first to secure steadfast humility of heart, to carry you on by the perfection of love not to the knowledge which puffs up, but to that which enlightens.

St. John Cassian, *Conference 14, 10, 1*

Do not approach the word of the mysteries found in Scripture without first praying and asking God's help. Say: 'Lord allow me to experience the power found within'. Consider that prayer is the key that open the true sense of Scripture.

Isaac of Nineveh, *Ascetical Discourses, 73*

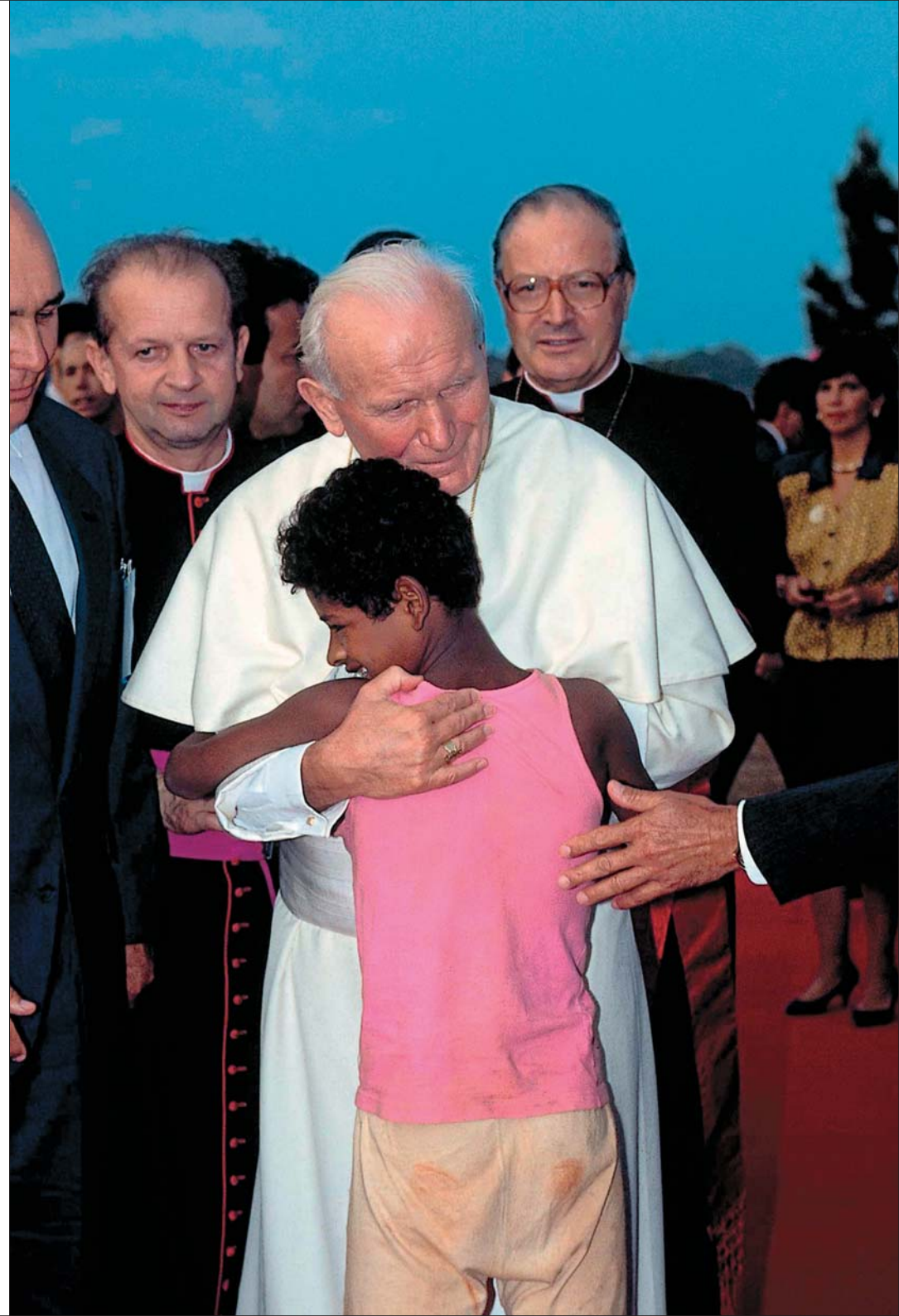
The voice of the Popes

♦ *John Paul II wanted to cross the threshold of the third millennium in the light of the Word made flesh and revealed to man.*

Contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Church prepares to cross the threshold of the Third Millennium. ... The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is not an event that can be relegated to the past. The whole of human history in fact stands in reference to him: our own time and the future of the world are illumined by his presence. He is "the Living One" (Rev 1:18), "who is, who was and who is to come" (Rev 1:4). Before him every knee must bend, in the heavens, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim that he is Lord (cf. Phil 2:10-11). In the encounter with Christ, every man discovers the mystery of his own life.

Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000
Incarnationis Mysterium

Dear Young People, this evening I will give you the Gospel. It is the Pope's gift to you at this unforgettable vigil. The word





which it contains is the word of Jesus. If you listen to it in silence, in prayer, seeking help in understanding what it means for your life from the wise counsel of your priests and teachers, then you will meet Christ and you will follow him, spending your lives day by day for him!

John Paul II, Tor Vergata, 19 August 2000

There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed *listening to the word of God*. Ever since the Second Vatican Council underlined the pre-eminent role of the word of God in the life of the Church, great progress has certainly been made in devout listening to Sacred Scripture and attentive study of it. Scripture has its rightful place of honour in the public prayer of the Church. Individuals and communities now make extensive use of the Bible, and among lay people, there are many who devote themselves to Scripture with the valuable help of theological and biblical studies. But it is above all the work of evangelization and catechesis which is drawing new life from attentiveness to the word of God. Dear brothers and sisters, this development needs to be consolidated and deepened, also by making sure that every family has a Bible. It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives.

John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 39

◆ At the beginning of his pontificate, **Pope Benedict XVI** also encouraged the practice of *lectio divina*:

In this context, I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *lectio divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is

speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church - I am convinced of it - a new spiritual springtime. As a strong point of biblical ministry, *lectio divina* should therefore be increasingly encouraged, also through the use of new methods, carefully thought through and in step with the times. It should never be forgotten that the Word of God is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (cf. Ps 119[118]: 105).

Address to the participants of the International Congress
for the 40th anniversary of *Dei Verbum*, 16 September 2005

the Word of God, Pope Benedict stressed:

Indeed, sharing in the life of God, a Trinity of love, is complete joy (cf. 1 Jn 1:4). And it is the Church's gift and inescapable duty to communicate that joy, born of an encounter with the person of Christ, the Word of God in our midst. In a world which often feels that God is superfluous or extraneous, we confess with Peter that he alone has "the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). There is no greater priority than this: to enable the people of our time once more to encounter God, the God who speaks to us and shares his love so that we might have life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10).

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 2

On the second to the last Sunday of the 2012 liturgical year, Benedict XVI thus emphasized the steadfastness of the Word:

Jesus says: "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (v. 31). Indeed we know that in the Bible the word of God is at the origin of the Creation: all the creatures, starting with the cosmic elements — sun, moon, the firmament — obey the word of God, they exist since they have been "called into being" by it. This creative force of the divine word is con-

centrated in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and also passes through his human words, which are the true "firmament" that directs the thought and journey of man on earth. For this reason Jesus does not describe the end of the world and when he uses apocalyptic images, he does not act as a "seer". On the contrary, he wishes to prevent his disciples in every epoch from being curious about dates and predictions; he wants instead to provide them with a key to a profound, essential interpretation and, above all, to point out to them the right way on which to walk, today and in the future, to enter eternal life.

Angelus, 18 November 2012

◆ **Pope Francis** has repeatedly stressed that the Word of God must deeply touch the person in order to proclaim it others:

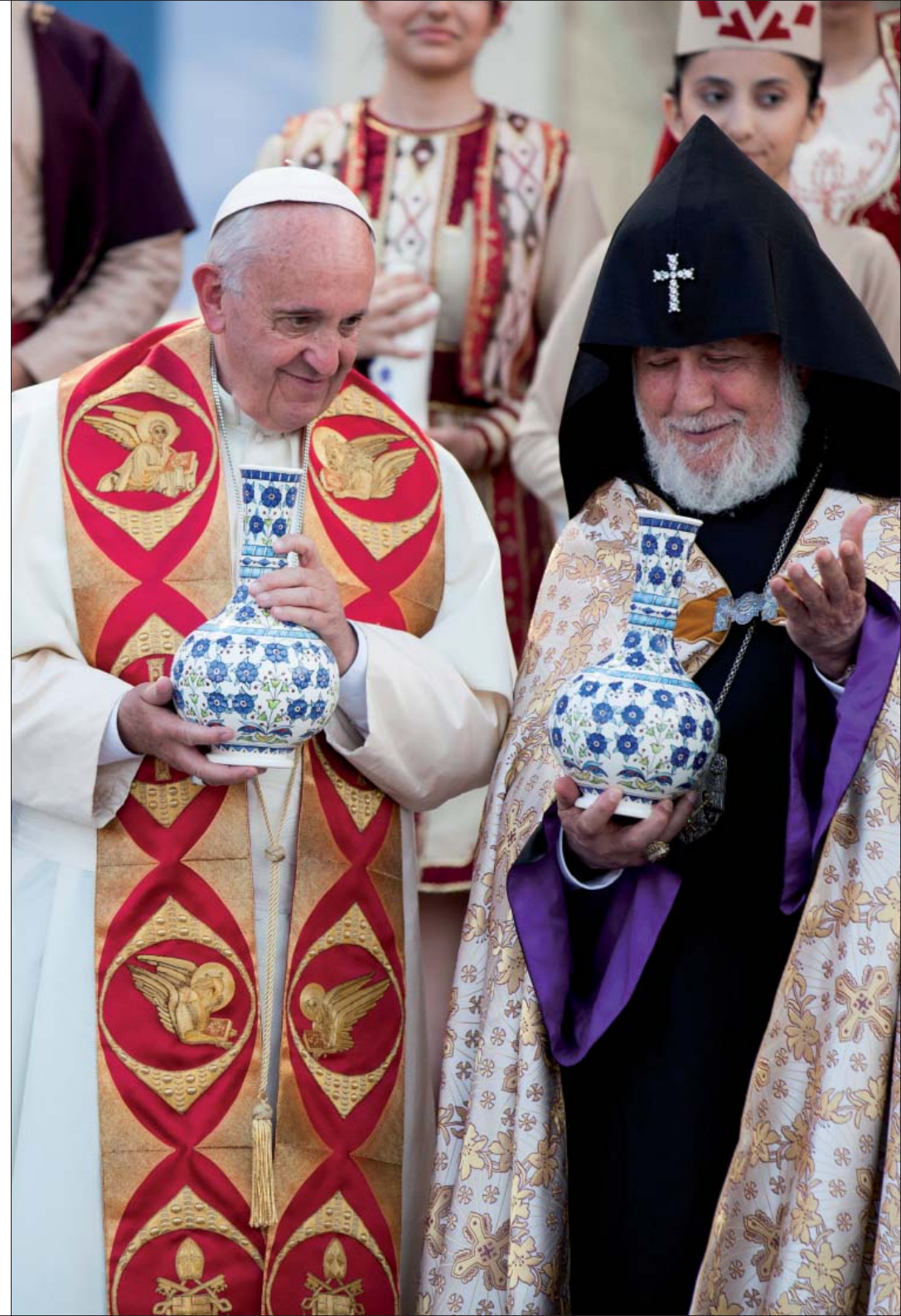
Jesus was angered by those supposed teachers who demanded much of others, teaching God's word but without being enlightened by it: "They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves will not lift a finger to move them" (Mt 23:4). The apostle James exhorted: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" (Jas 3:1). Whoever wants to preach must be the first to let the word of God move him deeply and become incarnate in his daily life. In this way, preaching will consist in that activity, so intense and fruitful, which is "communicating to others what one has contemplated".[117] For all these reasons, before preparing what we will actually say when preaching, we need to let ourselves be penetrated by that word which will also penetrate others, for it is a living and active word, like a sword "which pierces to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). This has great pastoral importance. Today too, people prefer to listen to witnesses: they "thirst for authenticity"

and “call for evangelisers to speak of a God whom they themselves know and are familiar with, as if they were seeing him”.

Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 150

Pope Francis reminds us that we are instruments in the hands of the Word:

We are servants of the *word of salvation*, which never returns to the Lord empty. Allowing ourselves to be “wounded” by the word is indispensable for expressing verbally that which overflows from the heart. For the word of God “is piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). We are servants of the *word of eternal life*, and we believe that man not only lives on bread, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. (cf. Mt 4:4). Aided by the Holy Spirit, we must nourish ourselves at the table of the word by reading, listening, studying and bearing witness with our lives. We devote time to those we love, and here we are dealing with the love of God who desires to talk to us and offer us words of life eternal. We are servants of the *word of reconciliation*, also among Christians, and we wish with all our heart that “the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph” (2 Thess 3:1). It is right therefore to expect a new impetus to our spiritual life from a greater respect for God’s word. We are servants of the *word that “went out” from God and “was made flesh”* (Jn 1:14). It is vital that the Church today go out to proclaim the Gospel to all, in all places, on all occasions, without delay, reluctance or fear (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 23). We do so in obedience to the Lord’s missionary mandate, certain of his presence among us until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20). We are servants of the *word of truth* (cf. Jn 8:32). We are convinced that “the unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In



the Body of Christ, ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14:6), who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth?” (*Ut Unum Sint*, 18). We are servants of the *powerful word of God* that enlightens, protects, defends, heals and frees. “The word of God is not fettered!” (2 Tim 2: 9). Many of our brothers and sisters are in prison on account of the word, and many more have shed their blood as a testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Address to the Delegation of the *Church Relations Committee*
of the *United Bible Societies*, 5 October 2017

Reflecting on the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40), which highlights Deacon Philip and his mission, Pope Francis notes:

This dialogue between Philip and the Ethiopian leads us to reflect on the fact that reading Scripture is not enough; we need to understand the meaning, to find the “core” by going beyond the “peel”, tapping into the Spirit who vivifies the letter. As Pope Benedict said at the opening of the Synod on the Word of God, “exegesis, the true reading of Holy Scripture, is not only a literary phenomenon.... It is the movement of my existence” (Address at the Opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 6 October 2008). To enter the Word of God is to be open to step outside one’s own boundaries in order to encounter and conform to Christ who is the living Word of the Father.

General Audience, October 2, 2019

Lectio Divina

Lectio divina is among the various initiatives that can be planned for the Sunday of the Word of God. As Pope Francis states in *Aperuit illis*, it is important on this Sunday: “to show the importance of learning how to read, appreciate and pray daily with Sacred Scripture, especially through the practice of *lectio divina* (n. 3).

Here are some practical suggestions for carrying out *lectio divina*, with a concrete proposal for the *lectio* and exegetical commentary on the Gospel for the Sunday of the Word of God (Mt 4:12-23), January 26, 2020 (Third Sunday of Ordinary Time).

Pope Francis’ suggestion

According to the Holy Father, “There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call *lectio divina*. It consists of reading God’s word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us. This prayerful reading of the Bible is not something separate from the study undertaken by the preacher to ascertain the central message of the text; on the contrary, it should begin with that study and then go on to discern how *that same message* speaks to his own life. The spiritual reading of a text must start with its literal sense. Otherwise, we can easily make the text say what we think is convenient, useful for confirming us in our previous decisions, suited to our own patterns of thought. Ultimately this

would be tantamount to using something sacred for our own benefit and then passing on this confusion to God's people. We must never forget that sometimes "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: "Lord, what does this text say *to me*? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this? Or perhaps: What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 152-153).

First scheme: The Word at the centre

The *lectio* opens with the enthronement of the Bible, which is placed, open, in the centre, so that it is visible to all present. A suitable song is sung during the enthronement. A lighted candle is placed next to the Bible.

♦ *Entering into an atmosphere of prayer*

The leader of the *lectio* introduces it with an invocation to the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of those present to listen.



◆ *Listening to the Word*

Everyone sits and listens to the proclamation of the Scripture passage chosen. After a few moments of silence, the leader lets the Word resonate, emphasizing some expressions or sentences from the text by rereading very slowly some passages or words, without any comment. A time of silence follows, at the end of which some comments are made: it is a matter of grasping the meaning of the passage, helping to see the traces of God's love that shine through the leading idea (what does this page tell us about God's love?), being cautious of the different forms of moralising and the temptation to dwell on what "*should or should not be done*".

◆ *Revering the Word*

When the Word of God is received, it spontaneously translates into thankfulness, a prayer for the Church and for the world. As God manifests himself, gives himself, and makes himself a com-

panion on the journey, so, too, the believer who has accepted his Word opens his heart to his brothers and sisters and presents them to the Lord.

The leader invites those present to express all of this in the silence of a gesture, performed slowly and in a collected manner. If the space is large enough, an incense burner with glowing charcoal and a small tray with incense can be placed next to the sacred text. Each person can express their act of veneration by placing some incense in the burner and pausing for a few moments in prayer. If the space is small, candles can be handed out and each person can light theirs from the candle burning light next to the Sacred Scripture.

All this can be accompanied with a quiet refrain sung in a subdued voice.

◆ *Remain in the Word*

At the end of the gesture, the leader invites those present to express spontaneously some intentions for prayer. Then, everyone joins together to invoke that which sums up the whole of Christian prayer: *the Our Father*. It can be concluded with a prayer, taken from the Liturgy of the Hours of the day, then, after a suitable final song, the assembly is dismissed.

Second scheme: the method of the Truth, the Way, the Life

The *lectio* opens with the enthronement of the Bible, which is placed, open, in the centre, so that it is visible to all present. During the enthronement, a suitable song is sung. A lighted candle is placed next to the Bible.

◆ *Entering into an atmosphere of prayer*

The leader of the *lectio* introduces it with an invocation to the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of those present to listen.



◆ *The Word is Truth*

Everyone sits and listens to the proclamation of the Bible passage chosen.

After a few moments of silence, the leader lets the Word resonate, emphasizing some expressions or sentences from the text by rereading very slowly some passages or words, without any comment. A time of silence follows, at the end of which some comments are made: it is a matter of grasping the meaning of the passage, helping to see the traces of God's love that shine through the leading idea (what does this page tell us about God's love?), being cautious of different forms of moralising and the temptation to dwell on what "*should or should not be done*".

◆ *The Word is the Way*

Listening is followed by at least fifteen minutes of silence during which those present ask themselves: How does God's love shine

through this text? How did Jesus live and incarnate it during his entire ministry? How did the apostles understand it? What does this passage say to me? Can Jesus live this dimension of God's love in me? How can I make this passage express itself in my everyday life?

◆ *The Word is Life*

The leader of the *lectio* invites those present to express spontaneously some intentions for prayer. One can express: a prayer to the Spirit to live the aspect of God's love that emerged from the passage; a plea for forgiveness for the discord between that aspect and one's life; a reason for gratitude for the Father's generosity; a manifestation of trust in God's faithful love ... Then, everyone joins together to invoke that which sums up the whole of Christian prayer: *the Our Father*. It can be concluded with a prayer, taken from the Liturgy of the Hours of the day, then, after a suitable final song, the assembly is dismissed.



Lectio divina for the Sunday of the Word of God

Below we suggest a complete outline of *lectio divina*, which can be integrated with the personal reading of the exegetical commentary on the Gospel for January 26, 2020, the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time and the Sunday of the Word of God: Mt 4:12-23.

Preparation for prayer

We open our meeting, preparing ourselves to welcome the Word of God and to listen to the Master. Humbly and confidently, we ask the Holy Spirit for his strength.

Come Holy Spirit.

You are the One who consecrated Jesus with anointing
sending him to bring the good news to the poor;

You are the One who, with baptism,
has allowed us to become children of God
and living members of the Church;

You are the One who, in the sacrament of Confirmation,
has given us the courage to announce and witness ...

Fill us with your presence and your strength,
with your courage and your grace.

Make us understand that today God continues to call
to the work of evangelization.

Help us participate in this service
by living it in communion and solidarity.

Holy Spirit, awaken us, consecrate us, send us.

Reading of the text

The news of the arrest of John the Baptist becomes for Jesus the “sign” that the time of the Kingdom has come: what many read as yet another disappointment, for him it is the episode that inaugurates a time of grace. From “bad news” flows the “good

news” of the Gospel that summons, a gift, a call. Let us listen to the proclamation of the passage.

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum—um by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

*“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
toward the sea, across the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned.”*

From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

After listening to the passage, each one reads it again in silence. Jesus outlines his mission after reading a passage from Isaiah.

Let us go through the verbs used: what does the mission of Jesus consist of? To whom does he feel sent? Where does the authority come from to fulfil his mission?

Why does Jesus immediately involve others in the proclamation of the Gospel?

Meditation on the passage

Jesus finds in the Word of God the terms, the right words to express his vocation and his mission. Like Jesus and like the first Christian communities, we, too, turn to the Word proclaimed in the Church in the light of faith in Jesus Christ, to find in it the roots of our life and the meaning of our mission.

Let us ask ourselves: how do I nourish my relationship with God? Do I let the Word tell me who I am and what I am called to live? What aspects of Jesus am I called to incarnate in my daily life? Who are the first persons that Jesus wants to reach even through me?

Let us simply share the fruit of our personal reflections on the Gospel passage.

Prayer

The exchange of thoughts about this passage of the Word of God has certainly reminded us of the gift of the Christian vocation and the responsibility of proclaiming it. Let us express our prayer of praise, gratitude, and request aloud.

Let us conclude our meeting by reciting together the “Prayer for Wisdom” (Wi 9:1-6, 9-11, 13-18)

“O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy,
who hast made all things by thy word,
and by thy wisdom hast formed man,
to have dominion over the creatures thou hast made,
and rule the world in holiness and righteousness,
and pronounce judgment in uprightness of soul,



give me the wisdom that sits by thy throne,
and do not reject me from among thy servants.
For I am thy slave and the son of thy maidservant,
a man who is weak and short-lived,
with little understanding of judgment and laws;
for even if one is perfect among the sons of men,
yet without the wisdom that comes from thee he will be
regarded as nothing.

With thee is wisdom, who knows thy works
and was present when thou didst make the world,
and who understand what is pleasing in thy sight
and what is right according to thy commandments.
Send her forth from the holy heavens,
and from the throne of thy glory send her,
that she may be with me and toil,
and that I may learn what is pleasing to thee.
For she knows and understands all things,
and she will guide me wisely in my actions
and guard me with her glory.
For what man can learn the counsel of God?
Or who can discern what the Lord wills?
For the reasoning of mortals is worthless,
and our designs are likely to fail,
for a perishable body weighs down the soul,
and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful[a] mind.
We can hardly guess at what is on earth,
and what is at hand we find with labour;
but who has traced out what is in the heavens?
Who has learned thy counsel, unless thou hast given
wisdom
and sent thy holy Spirit from on high?
And thus the paths of those on earth were set right,
and men were taught what pleases thee,
and were saved by wisdom.”

Exegetical commentary on Mt 4:12-23

The fulfilment of Sacred Scripture in the mission of Jesus is the essence of the liturgy of the Word. The promise of the prophet Isaiah heard in the first reading, the light of hope for the people who sat in darkness, is realized with the beginning of Jesus' mission. The Gospel passage is divided into four main phases: the fulfilment of the promise of the light of salvation for the Lord's people, the first preaching of Jesus on conversion and the coming of the kingdom of heaven, the choice of the first four disciples and the beginnings of the mission in Galilee.

- First of all, by going to live in Capernaum in Galilee, Jesus fulfils Isaiah's prophecy for a people without hope, without light and in the shadow of death. Isaiah 8:22-9:1-2 is a prophecy rich in hope for those who are far from the religious, political and cultural centre of their time. The controversy that connects Matthew with the messianic expectations of Israel made by Jesus is subtle. Finally, the promised and awaited Messiah has arrived, but he is not going to live in Jerusalem, nor in other important urban centres of Palestine, but in Capernaum. He begins his mission in the “district of the Gentiles”, as the Galilee of his time was called and in the country, more than in a city, like Capernaum. The mission of Jesus does not start from the centre, but from the outskirts of the most remote province of the Roman Empire.
- Referring to the peoples or foreigners who lived in Galilee, the universality of salvation is delineated, typical of the Gospel of Matthew, so much so that only he among the evangelists pays attention to the Galilee of the Gentiles. On the one hand, the beginning of the preaching of Jesus to the Galilee of the Gentiles brings the fulfilment of hope to

those far away; on the other hand, it anticipates the mission entrusted to the disciples. Looking back, the adoration of the Magi had already anticipated the universality of salvation accomplished with the birth of Jesus Christ (see Mt 2:1-12). The same universal perspective closes the Gospel of Matthew, when the Risen One sends the disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (see Mt 28:19). Among these openings towards the Magi who reach the child Jesus to adore him and the disciples sent to make disciples of all peoples, Jesus inaugurates the universal mission starting from the area inhabited, for the most part, by foreigners in Palestine. The mission of Jesus and the disciples after him breaks down the barriers and walls that separate people and becomes an encounter of salvation for all peoples. While foreigners could not enter the temple of Jerusalem because they were considered “sinners”, from the religious point of view, Jesus did not hesitate to live among them.

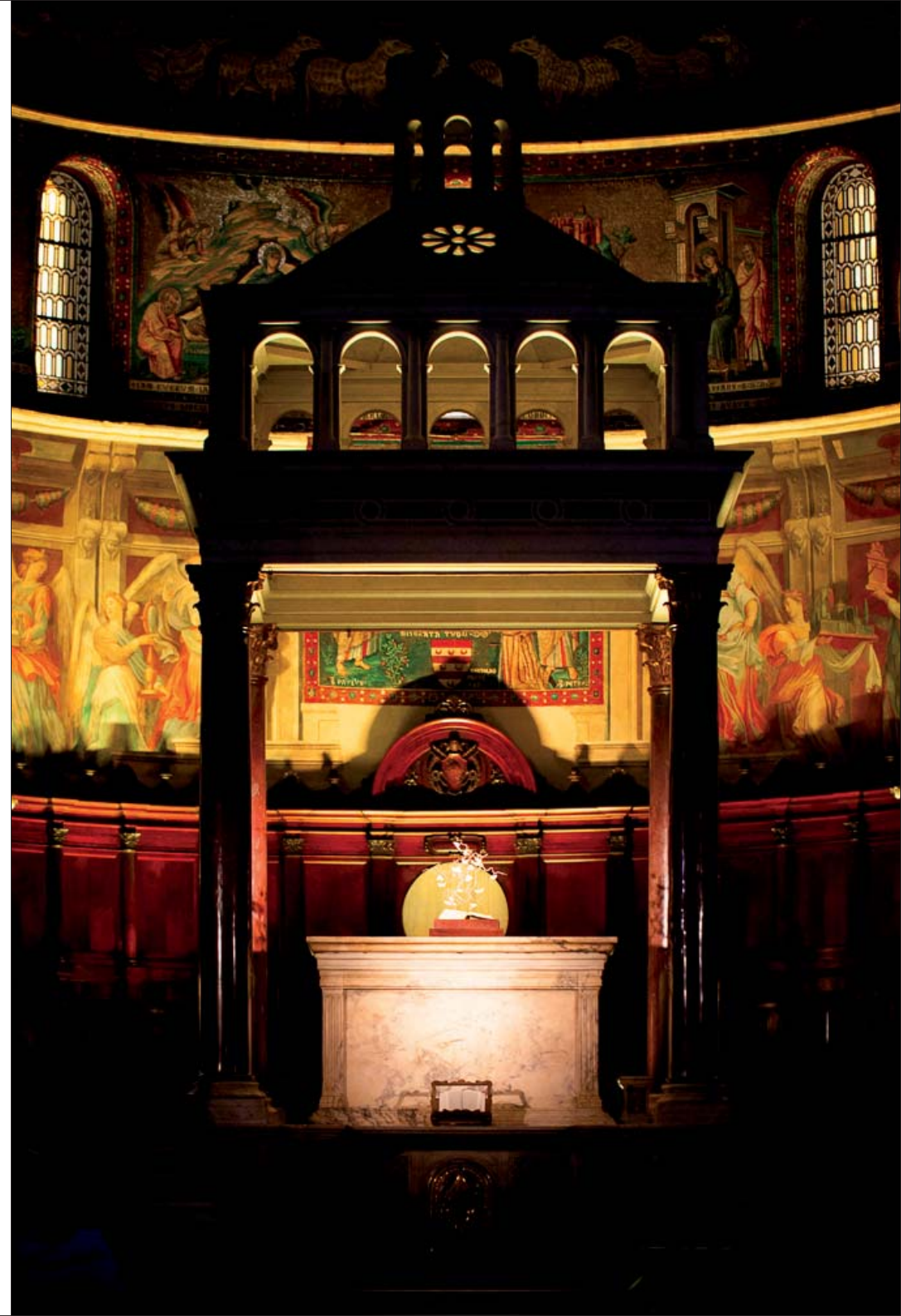
The preaching of Jesus begins with the appeal, addressed to everyone, to convert for the coming of the kingdom of heaven is near. Between conversion and the coming of the kingdom of heaven, there is a profound connection because only through conversion is it possible to recognize the signs that make the kingdom of heaven present. Without conversion, we do not realize that the kingdom of heaven began with the mission of Jesus with those far away and immersed in darkness. For the kingdom of heaven is not limited to exact areas and places, but is found where there are the poor in spirit (see Mt 5:3), and in those who are persecuted because of justice (see Mt 5:10), only conversion allows entry into this realm so different from other forms of power. The kingdom of heaven, inaugurated by Jesus, is not made up of places of power, but of people who change their mentality

to follow him, who in the present live according to the paradoxical logic of the Beatitudes. The kingdom of heaven is not of the poor because they are poor, but because “in spirit” they have placed their trust in the Lord.

- The evangelization of the Galilee of the Gentiles, and the call for conversion of all who encounter Jesus are reflected in the choice of the first four disciples: Peter and Andrew, James and John. The evangelist recounts their calling with extreme brevity: Jesus sees four fishermen throwing or fixing nets at sea and invites them to follow him. Without hesitation, the four disciples immediately leave their nets and boats to follow him. The call of the first disciples is astounding since it is an unconditional choice or election. Jesus does not stop to investigate their origin, reputation and abilities on which his gaze rests. He chooses them as they are and transforms them into fishers of men or disciples who learn to call other people to follow Jesus. The following of Jesus is always marked by grace or election by grace and not by the merits of those who are called.

The response of the first disciples is immediate because they trust him without questioning his reputation or his messianic project. They will only have heard of his preaching just begun in Galilee. Yet at that time, the messiahs who promised to deliver Israel from foreign occupation sprang up like mushrooms. Most of them had fallen short of the promises made to the Palestinian people, immersed in darkness. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of heaven with the choice of people to whom he points without knowing them, willing to follow him unconditionally.

It is no minor thing that two disciples are chosen at a time: first Peter and Andrew, and James and John. According to the Jewish Law, witnessing needs at least two people to be credible (see Dt 19:15; Mt 18:16). The testimony of a person is not enough to be accepted, since alone it is subject



to a high degree of arbitrariness. With the following of the first four disciples, Jesus inaugurates what he will call “the Church” (Mt 18:17): “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mt 18:20). In its most essential core, the Church is not made of walls, or of spaces, but of people of flesh and blood who follow Jesus and are willing to bear witness to his mission of salvation.

The call of the first disciples is dominated by mutual trust, but above all by the priority of the choice made by Jesus with respect to the response of the disciples. Usually at that time, it was the disciples who chose their teacher, based on his ability to teach and the content of his message. The prestige of a master guaranteed the choice and following of the disciples. In the case of Jesus, precedence is always given to his choice: it is not the disciples who chose him, but the opposite. Whoever becomes a disciple of Jesus does not choose the church that pleases him or the one of his liking, but he is placed in the Church that welcomes him because he was chosen by the Lord. Only in this way the Emmanuel or “God with us” (Mt 1:23), according to the meaning of his name, given to him from birth, is among his own and can be recognized in his Church.

- Between the unconditional call and the priority of his election, Jesus inaugurates his mission by creating the essential core of the Church. Contrary to the commonplace idea that Jesus did not found any Church, it remains established that on the Lake of Galilee, on the outskirts of the world, Jesus inaugurated the coming of the kingdom of heaven by choosing people willing to follow him during the mission. Without any break between the choice of the first disciples and the first public discourse of Jesus in Galilee (Mt 5:1–7:29), Matthew notes that Jesus crossed the region, taught

in the synagogues, preached the gospel of the kingdom and healed all the forms of illness he encountered. With Jesus the kingdom of heaven does not only concern spiritual or inner salvation, but involves every area of human life: from the preaching of the truest and most beautiful news that awaits those who have no hope, to the teaching where we gather for prayer, as in the synagogue, to the healing of any kind of disease. The salvation announced by Jesus is not theoretical, nor merely an unfinished promise: it is always real salvation, accomplished in the encounter with him, which involves the health and healing of every person.

The beginning of Jesus’ mission, with his living in Capernaum, the preaching of the kingdom, the choice of the first disciples and the healing of every kind of disease, fulfils the hopes of all peoples, without preference for anyone. If the Bible is the book of the people, as Pope Francis likes to call it in *Aperuit illis* 4, it is above all because with Jesus of Nazareth, all the promises of God are realized with the salvation that the encounter with him brings.



SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING

- ◆ To put Pope Francis' suggestions into practice and find "ways to mark this Sunday with a certain solemnity" (*Aperuit illis*, 3), each diocese, each parish community and every ecclesial reality in general, according to their charism and interests, should think of some initiatives to propose and implement.
- ◆ Following are some celebrational and pastoral suggestions that may be helpful.

Some practical suggestions

First of all, it is important, to prepare for the *Sunday of the Word of God* well in advance. Preparations should be both spiritually (personal and community prayer) and practical (with suitable planning depending on each community).

The first step is to set up a group of people who can organize and coordinate the event. The task of this group will be:

- To pray that the event goes well.
- To plan the event. (present the plan to different age groups, include a cultural, historical and biblical part)
- To choose other people who can do the practical part of the event
- To estimate the expenses of the event
- To prepare the materials needed
- To spread the news about the event.
- To reach out to persons in difficulty (the sick, nursing homes, prisons, charitable organizations, etc.)
- To involve other faiths and Christian religions, if possible
- To bring the Good News to non-believers as well



◆ *Spiritual preparation*

First of all, we must remember that the Bible is not only a text of high cultural, moral, historical, social and artistic value, capable of inspiring the thought of people today. The Bible contains the Word of God that is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). To encounter the living Word it is necessary to dedicate space and time for spiritual preparation. At least one week before the event, communities should include in the prayer of the faithful an intention dedicated to the success of the event. The members of the organizing group, as well as the catechists, the evangelizers and other groups involved in the proclamation of the Gospel, could organize an extended time of listening, reflection and adoration, to highlight the union of the Word and the Eucharist.

◆ *Planning the event*

The plan for carrying out the initiative should be aimed at both communities and individuals, always keeping in mind that the Bible is the Word of the living God, while also taking into account its recognized cultural value with its many implications.

◆ *Involving the faithful*

Information about the event must be ready early, and reach as many people as possible. Undoubtedly, personal invitations are the most direct way of informing people about the initiative. You can also use flyers and leaflets that can be distributed easily and can be hung on various notice boards. Social media (Facebook, twitter, etc.), other programs or apps are good ways to reach as many people as possible.

◆ *Living the Sunday of the Word of God*

It is good to remember that the program is not the main purpose of this Sunday. Rather it is to foster a personal and community encounter with the Word of God. We must become instruments in the hands of the Lord, always remembering that “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Is 55:10-11).

◆ *Continuing the experience of the Word of God*

The event will end, but the Word of God continues to work in our hearts. Follow-up formation experiences should be provided (for example, weekly or monthly *lectio divina*, bible study groups, etc.) through which encounter with the Word of God can continue, rooting ongoing formation in the faithful.

Enthronement of the Word of God and giving the Bible

Hopefully, the ritual of enthronement will take place at least once a year during the solemn Eucharistic celebration on the *Sunday of the Word of God*.

Next to the altar, or the ambo, or in another specially prepared place (e.g. a chapel), a throne pulpit should be prepared that is raised, ornate and visible to all of the assembly where the sacred text will be placed. Copies of the Bible that will be given to the faithful during the celebration can be arranged around the throne.

The Holy Mass begins as usual - if possible, with the solemn procession with the censer, the incense boat, the cross and the candles, and carrying the sacred text according to liturgical customs.

After the initial greeting, the celebrant introduces with these or similar words:

C. God, wanting to share his immense love with us, sent his Word to live among us, so that we could know the love of God. The Son of God became incarnate, showing us the merciful face of the Father and reconciling us with Him. Today the Church throughout the world is celebrating the *Sunday of the Word of God*. We want to open our hearts to the divine presence in the Holy Scriptures, and rediscover the meaning of our life that is given to us in the Word that became flesh.

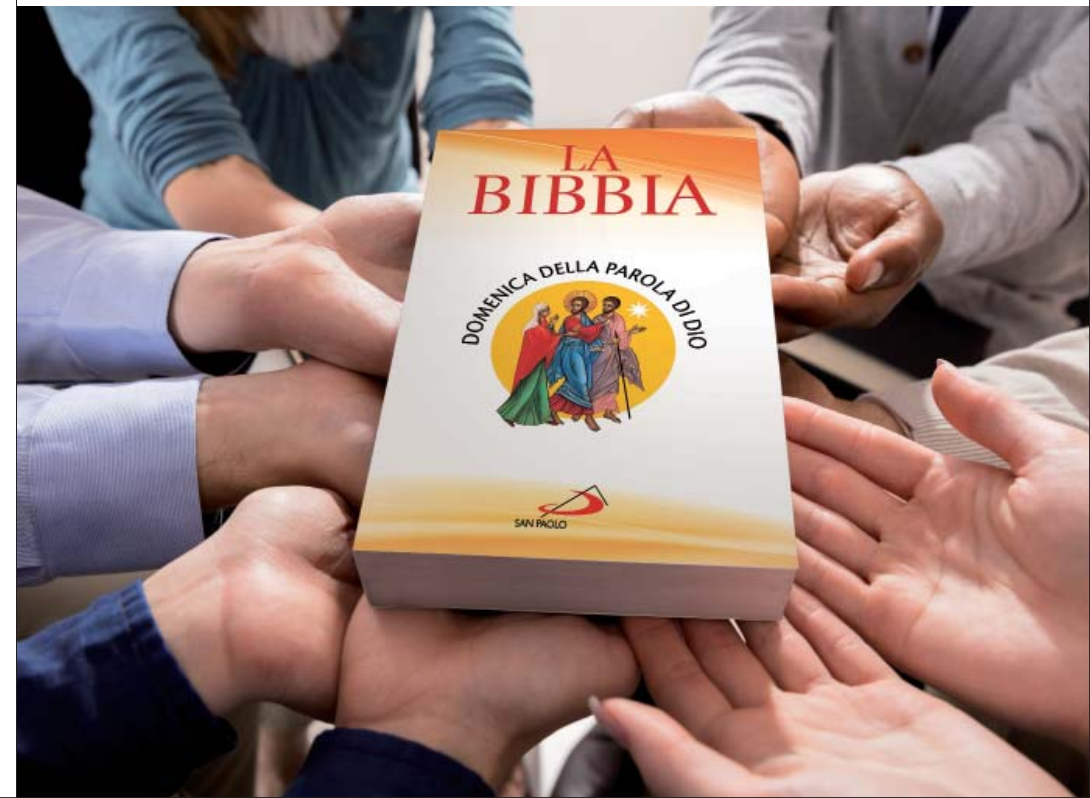
To welcome worthily this Word, let us ask the Lord for forgiveness.

The penitential act follows (sprinkling with holy water is recommended) and the initial rites of the Holy Mass. Then the Liturgy of the Word begins as usual.

For the proclamation of the Gospel, the Book of the Gospels is brought from the altar to the ambo in procession, where it is incensed. At the end of the reading of the Gospel, the minister kisses the sacred text and then brings it in procession to the throne, where it is placed and opened.

The homily follows, after which, the Bible (or one of the books, eg., one of the Gospels) can be given to everyone present (or only to some). After a brief moment of meditation, the celebrant introduces:

C. Dear friends, the evangelist John reminds us that “this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17: 3). We too want to know God who has revealed himself through his Word. We therefore want to welcome the Word, realizing



the importance of reading the Word daily, to live ever more closely to Christ Jesus.

Let us now present our prayer to God.

Dopo un breve momento di preghiera silenziosa, il celebrante, con le braccia allargate, recita:

C. Father of the light,
We praise you and bless you
for all the wonders of your love.
You have given new life to your children
through water and the Holy Spirit
in the womb of Mother church
and now you are calling them to listen and proclaim
the Word that saves.



Jesus Christ who is your Word who became man,
guide them to the knowledge of the mystery
hidden from the learned and the intelligent
and revealed to the little ones.

Let them open their hearts
to understand the meaning of the Holy Scriptures.
May they become living witnesses of the Gospel,
those who will read from these books.
Intercede for them Mary,
Mother of Wisdom,

You who first received
the Word made flesh in your womb.
Holy Spirit give each of us
the grace to work together
in simplicity and joy
in proclaiming your Word,
to the glory of your name.
Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

The celebrant goes to the throne, takes the texts to be given and distributes them to the faithful. While giving the text, he says:

C. Receive the Holy Scriptures and joyfully read, announce
and bear witness to the Word of God.

R. Amen

After distributing the texts, the Holy Mass continues as usual with the Creed and the Prayers of the Faithful.

Blessing of those called to proclaim the Word of God

The following blessing can be elaborated to emphasize the importance of the Word of God, *received* and *proclaimed* by the faithful. This can be done on the *Sunday of the Word of God*, or on another day considered more appropriate. If the blessing is done on *Sunday of the Word of God*, it can be done after the homily and before the Bible is given to the faithful.

At the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration the faithful who will receive the blessing take their place in front of the altar (*e.g.*, in the first rows of the nave).

After the homily, the celebrant addresses these words to those present:

C. Dear ones, all of us who have been baptized, have the responsibility to know God through his Word and to proclaim and give witness to him, especially to those who have not yet met him. Today we ask a special blessing upon some of our brothers and sisters who want to dedicate themselves in a special way to proclaiming the Word of God. The following are those in our community who have been called to proclaim the Word.

The celebrant reads the list of names. When each person hears their name, they stand up and say:

R. Here I am



At the end of the presentation, the celebrant says:

C. May the Holy Spirit come upon these brothers and sisters so that they may receive and proclaim the Word of the living God.

The assembly says the following prayer invoking the Holy Spirit (another prayer or appropriate song can be used.):

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



Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit
we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His
consolations,

Through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

(Saint Thomas Aquinas)

The celebrant then says the following blessing:

C. We praise and bless you, O God,
because in the mysterious design of your mercy
your living Word became flesh,
and came to dwell among us,
to free us from the slavery of sin.

He conquered death, and
before going up to you, Father,
he sent the Apostles,
to proclaim the Gospel of life to the peoples.
Lord, look upon these your servants,
invested with the sign of the cross
we send them as messengers of peace and salvation.

Guide their steps with your right hand
and sustain them with the power of your grace,
so that they do not falter
under the weight of apostolic labors.

Let the voice of Christ resound in their words
and may those who will hear them
be drawn to the obedience of the Gospel.

Infuse the Holy Spirit into their hearts,
So that, doing everything for everyone,
they may lead a multitude of sons
and daughters to you, Father,
who sing your praises forever in the Church.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

Enthronement of the Bible at home

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, at the end of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to “The Word of God in the life and Mission of the Church” we read: “The great mystery of marriage is the source of the essential responsibility of parents towards their children. Part of authentic parenthood is to pass on and bear witness to the meaning of life in Christ: through their fidelity and the unity of family life, spouses are the first to proclaim God’s word to their children. The ecclesial community must support and assist them in fostering family prayer, attentive hearing of the word of God, and knowledge of the Bible. To this end, the Synod urged that every household have its Bible, to be kept in a worthy place and used for reading and prayer. Whatever help is needed in this regard can be provided by priests, deacons and a well-prepared laity. The Synod also recommended the formation of small communities of families, where common prayer and meditation on passages of Scripture can be cultivated” (n. 85).

On a day after the *Sunday of the Word of God*, the whole family gathers in the evening in their home, around the main table with a crucifix, an icon of the Blessed Mother, a candle and the Bible on it. One of the family members lights the candle and says:

- The light of Christ

Everyone responds:

- Thanks be to God

Then another person recites the following prayer (the text can be subdivided into several parts to be read by more than one person):

Lo Spirito Santo
si è completamente impadronito di te, Vergine Maria.

Dimora in te, vive in te,
In te realizza la più grande opera della storia:
«Il Verbo fatto Carne».
Agisce liberamente in te.
Tu gli appartieni...

Insegnami ad ascoltare lo Spirito:
«Lo Spirito del Padre vostro parla in voi» (Mt 10,20)
Insegnami ad affidarmi allo Spirito:
«Lo Spirito stesso intercede con insistenza per noi con gemiti inesprimibili» (Rm 8,26)
Insegnami a lasciar agire liberamente in me lo Spirito:
«Infatti tutti quelli che sono guidati dallo Spirito di Dio, costoro sono figli di Dio» (Rm 8,14)

Lo spirito umano non può capire tutto questo. Solo la meditazione della Parola di Dio può introdurci in questo mistero. Solo Dio può rivelarci qual è il suo Spirito e quanto potente e dolce è la sua azione nelle nostre anime.
Vieni Santo Spirito.

(Card. François-Xavier Van Thuan)

Tutti rispondono:

- Amen.

A family member takes the Bible, opens it, and begins to read:

Listen to the word of the Lord from the Gospel according to Luke (Lk 24:13-32)

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was



going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

The family members kiss the Bible followed by a moment of silence, of meditation on the text just read and personal prayer.

Then a person reads the following comment:

Jesus' encounter with those two disciples appears to be completely accidental. It seems to be one of those chance meetings that happen in life. The two disciples are walking, deep in thought, and a stranger comes up alongside them. It is Jesus, but their eyes are not able to recognize him. And therefore, Jesus begins his "therapy of hope". What takes place on this road is a therapy of hope. Who administers it? Jesus.

First of all, He asks and listens. Our God is not an intrusive God. Even though he knows the reason for the disappointment of those two men, he gives them time to be able to fathom deeply the bitterness which has overcome them. Out of this comes a confession that is a refrain in human existence. "*We had hoped, but... We had hoped, but...*" (v. 21). How much sadness, how many defeats, how many failures there are in the lives of every person! Deep down, we are all a little like those two disciples. How many times we have hoped in our lives. How many times we have felt like we were one step away from happiness only to find ourselves knocked to the ground, disappointed. But, Jesus walks with all people who, discouraged, walk with their heads hung low. And walking with them in a discreet manner, he is able to restore hope.

Jesus speaks to them, above all through *the Scriptures*. Those who take up God's Book will not encounter easy heroism, fierce campaigns of conquest. True hope never comes cheaply. It always undergoes defeat. The hope of those who do not suffer is perhaps not even [hope]. God does not like to be loved as one would love a ruler who leads his people to victory, annihilating his enemies in a bloodbath. Our God is a faint light burning on a cold and windy day, and as fragile as his presence in this world may appear, he has chosen the place that we all disdain...

We have all had difficult moments in life, dark moments in which we walked in sadness, pensive, without horizons, with only a wall before us. And Jesus is always beside us to give us hope, to warm our hearts and to say: "Go ahead, I am with

you. Go ahead". The secret of the road that leads to Emmaus is simply this: despite appearances to the contrary, we continue to be loved and God will never stop loving us. God will walk with us always, always, even in the most painful moments, even in the worst moments, even in moments of defeat. That is where the Lord is. And this is our hope. Let us go forward with this hope! Because he is beside us and walks with us. Always!

(Pope Francis, General Audience May 24, 2017)

After the comment, everyone recites the Our Father together:

- Our Father who art in heaven...

At the end of the prayer, the person who lighted the candle takes the Bible and makes the sign of the cross with it, blessing the whole family.

The candle is then extinguished, saying:

- Stay with us, Lord, now and for ever.

Amen

The Bible can then remain exposed in a dignified corner of the home.



PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS

- ◆ Until the people of God become familiar with the Word, in addition to the liturgical-celebrational suggestions, it may be helpful to have other ways such as educational and recreational-festive activities that will help the faithful see the Bible as God's "gift".
- ◆ Already in the text of Ne 8, Ezra, Nehemiah and the Levites invite the people to rejoice, not be sad and to celebrate around the Word.

Educational Suggestions

The apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* states that the word of God reaches men and women “through an encounter with witnesses who make it present and alive”. In a particular way, young people need to be introduced to the Word of God “through encounter and authentic witness by adults, through the positive influence of friends and the great company of the ecclesial community” (N. 97). For this reason, the *Sunday of the Word of God* is presented as a special occasion to meet those who have let themselves be shaped by the Word.

The great witnesses

In this sense, the figures of the *great founders or reformers* who made the Word of God the centre of their lives can be explored (St. Jerome, St. Domenic, St. Antonio of Padua, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Philip Neri, St. Theresa of Avila, Charles de Foucauld, Blessed Don Giacomo Alberione, St. Arnold Janssen...), as well as some martyrs who, in the name of the Word, experienced violence and death (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, blessed Father Giuseppe Girotti, Shahbaz Bhatti ...). A look at some *Orders* or *Congregations* or *ecclesial groups* can also be enriching. An example is the beautiful testimony of the young rapper Shoek, who was moved deeply by an encounter with the Word of God: https://youtu.be/W_TliyyUkCA.

The burning questions

Special moments of training or specific in-depth studies for different categories of people deserve attention: children, students, university students, young spouses, parents, foreigners, the elderly, the sick ... You can tackle “hot” issues like the historical accuracy and importance of the Gospels, the formation of the Bible, the meaning of some difficult passages, inspiration, methods to read it in a proper way... organizing round tables and occasions for constructive exchange, getting an inspiration from a recently published book on the subject, or from a recent television or radio broadcast on the subject.

The way of beauty

Marc Chagall confessed that the Bible is “the colored alphabet in which almost all painters have dipped their brush”. The poet T.S. Eliot makes it a “garden of symbols, images, stories”. Capturing the reverberations of the Bible in literature, art, music, in



films, on the web ... these can provide the opportunity to come into contact with new worlds, which, in the name of beauty, present themselves as authoritative comments on the sacred pages: guided tours, concerts, pilgrimages that pave the way to many insights and reflections.

◆ *The multi-coloured world of the web*

The world of the web, where unexpected resources meet, is also worth exploring. Among the many, we highlight the initiative of two young people who started a really interesting project in 2014, totally dedicated to the Bible: the bible project (<https://thebibleproject.com/>). Today, after a few years, the project has reached one million subscribers who immerse themselves in the pages of the Bible, not only to know and deepen their understanding, but also to meditate and be changed by the Word.



Recreational suggestions

The *Sunday of the Word of God* is a people's event, to involve young and old alike through fun and festive activities. Therefore, we suggest some initiatives that each community can adapt and build upon with the help of young and not-so-young people.

◆ *Quizzes and marathons*

Team quizzes can be organized with questions related to people and facts found in the Bible.

In the Philippines, for example, biblical quizzes are an amazing success. They now involve entire provinces of the nation (<https://www.facebook.com/StPaulNationalBibleQuiz/>). Biblical marathons have also been successful. These involve the continuous reading, in stages, of an entire book of the bible. The book is introduced and then proclaimed, in a well-prepared context. These events can be followed by times for socializing (a breakfast, an aperitif ...).

◆ *Dramatizations and performances*

Dramatization of the texts can help one reflect on the Bible and understand its richness: for example, to enact the "after" of some biblical scenes left in suspense (like the endings of the parable of the Good Samaritan or of the merciful father, etc.) or the "tomorrow" of some gospel meetings (like the one with the rich young man, with the sinner, with Nicodemus, etc.). The experience of Bible drama, particularly widespread in Brazil (www.

bibliodrama.it), has been interesting. In recent years the BBC has been giving ample space to biblical radio plays, with very interesting responses (e.g. the radio drama on Judah written and broadcast in 2018 by Lucy Gannon).



For children

In planning the basic program for the *Sunday of the Word of God*, there should also be activities that are suitable for children. A good example could be the annual bible festival in Italy (www.festivalbiblico.it) that not only has many meetings, but also ideas, initiatives, suggestions, ways to reach all types of people: from the youngest to the oldest, from believers to the curious, from experts in the field to those who are discovering the Bible for the first time.





The logo



The logo for the *Sunday of the Word of God* gives particular prominence to the theme of relationship: a strong bond between the wayfarers, in an intertwining of looks, gestures, steps and words. In light of the passage about the disciples of Emmaus, Jesus appears as the one who “drew near and went with” humanity (Lk 24:15), and “dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). In him “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Walking among his own, he quickens his steps, pointing out to them the new horizons of evangelization, represented in the logo by the star: “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (Jn 10:3-4).



His words are one with those written in the scroll he is holding in his hands: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” (Rev 5:2). If the two disciples are confused by the mysteries of history, they are immediately reassured: “Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (Rev 5:5). “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk 24:27).

Familiarity with the Word of God arises from a relationship that comes from searching for the face of God in Sacred Scripture. The Bible is not there to give concepts but experiences, it does not just plunge us into a text, rather it opens us to meeting the Word of life decisive “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2Tm 3:16,17).

In the background there is a great light: there are those who see Jesus as a sun at sunset, citing Lk 24:29; we like to welcome the “rising sun” (Lk 1:78), which, in the Risen One, announces the dawn of a new mission destined for all peoples: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15).



The disciples

"Two of them were on their way" (Lk 24:13). In the two disciples, Luke captures the face of all believers. Attention to the interplay between masculine and feminine, which runs through all of Luke's narrative, has prompted some interpreters to see it as a couple, identifying the unnamed disciple as Cléopa's wife.

The light

As sunset approaches, another light is warming the disciples' heart: the light of the Word. In the Eucharistic gesture it will reach its fullness, coming into full communion with the Master: "And their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (Lk 24:31).

The Risen One

With discretion, Jesus stands in our path, he "puts himself in our midst", living our history, our questions. He questions and listens to those who openly express their disappointment, as well as those who hold it in the silence of their heart: "Jesus himself drew near and went with them" (Lk 24:15).

The star

Pointed to by the Risen One, it is the sign of Evangelization: "Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24:35).

The scroll

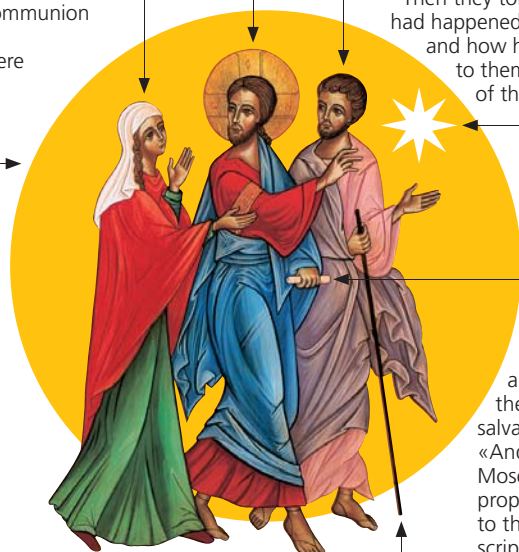
In the dialogue between The Old and New Testament the mystery of salvation is revealed. «And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lk 24:27).

The rod

Slender and uncertain, like all human securities, it expresses the fragility of the disciples who "stood still, looking sad" (Lk 24:17). The Risen One gives them strength through the Word "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb 4:12).

The feet

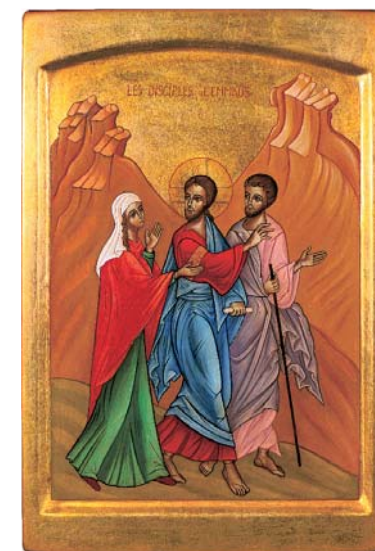
The Risen One walks in the footsteps of man and through the power of his Word he knows how to direct man in the right direction because "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). For this they "rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem" (Lk 24:33).



* The logo for the *Sunday of the Word of God* intertwines two artistic styles: the iconography of Sister Marie-Paul Farran and contemporary art of Giordano Redaelli.

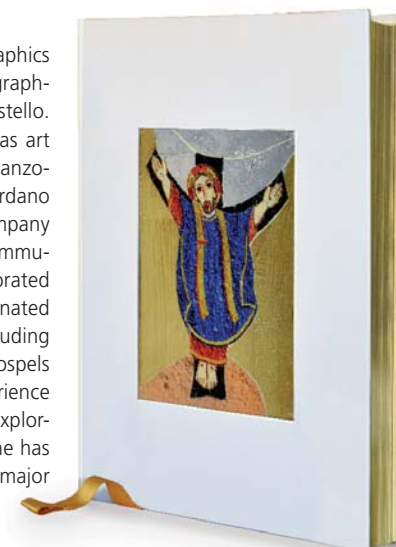
Suor Marie-Paul Farran

Sister Marie-Paul Farran was born November 10, 1930 in Cairo, Egypt. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1955, she was profoundly touched by the experience and subsequently entered the Benedictine monastery of Notre-Dame du Calvaire in Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives. In 1960, Brother Henry Corta, of the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld, introduced the sisters to writing icons. He did not limit himself to teaching technical skills, but deepened the awareness of each phase of the work, illustrating them through the pages of the Bible and the experiences of the main characters. The "school" of Brother Corta enchanted Sister Marie Paul to the point that writing icons became her mission. She loved to say: "When I write an icon I immerse myself in God and when "I write God" I feel so overwhelmed in him that I cannot express the experience in words." Sister Marie-Paul wrote icons until May 8, 2019 when God called her to contemplate the light of His face.



Giordano Redaelli

Giordano attended the Salesian School of Graphics in Milan. He then specialized in advertising graphics and visual arts at the Art School of Castello. After working as a graphic pager and then as art director of the weekly magazine *Sorrisi e Canzoni TV*, he founded a graphic art studio "Giordano Redaelli" in Milan and the "Methodius" company in Giussano, working in different areas of communication. In the editorial field, he has collaborated with important publishing houses. He impaginated various art books for San Paolo Edizioni including the *New Gospel of Art* and *Book of the Gospels of Mercy for the Jubilee of Mercy*. His experience in the field of graphics opened the way to exploring contemporary art. In the last few years he has exhibited his art work in various art shows in major European cities.





INDEX

<i>Presentation</i>	pag. 3
What is the Sunday of the Word of God?	pag. 7
THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION	pag. 11
THE “PLACES” AND THE “BOOKS OF THE WORD OF GOD	pag. 12
The Place: the ambo	pag. 12
The books: the Lectionary and the Book of the Gospels	pag. 15
<i>The Lectionary</i>	pag. 16
<i>The Book of the Gospels</i>	pag. 16
THE “GESTURES” TOWARDS THE WORD OF GOD	pag. 18
Reception of the Word	pag. 18
Enthronement of the Word of God	pag. 20
Proclamation of the Word	pag. 21
Proclamation of the Gospel	pag. 22
The gesture of veneration	pag. 22
Giving the Bible	pag. 23
THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS	pag. 25
HOW TO RECEIVE THE WORD OF GOD?	pag. 26
The voice of the Fathers of the Church	pag. 26
The voice of the Popes	pag. 30
LECTIO DIVINA	pag. 39
Pope Francis’ suggestion	pag. 39
First scheme: the Word at the centre	pag. 41
<i>Entering into an atmosphere of prayer</i>	pag. 41
<i>Listening to the Word</i>	pag. 42
<i>Revering the Word</i>	pag. 42
<i>Remain in the Word</i>	pag. 43
Second Scheme: the method of the Truth, the Way, the Life	pag. 43
<i>Entering into an atmosphere of prayer</i>	pag. 43

<i>The Word is Truth</i>	pag. 44
<i>The Word is the Way</i>	pag. 44
<i>The Word is Life</i>	pag. 45
Lectio divina for the Sunday of the Word of God	pag. 46
<i>Preparation for prayer</i>	pag. 46
<i>Reading the text</i>	pag. 46
<i>Meditation on the passage</i>	pag. 48
<i>Prayer</i>	pag. 48
Exegetical Commentary on Mt 4:12-23	pag. 51
 SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING	 pag. 59
SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS	pag. 60
<i>Spiritual preparation</i>	pag. 62
<i>Planning the event</i>	pag. 62
<i>Involving the faithful</i>	pag. 62
<i>Living the Sunday of the Word of God</i>	pag. 63
<i>Continuing the experience of the Word of God</i>	pag. 63
 ENTHRONEMENT OF THE WORD OF GOD AND GIVING THE BIBLE	 pag. 64
 BLESSING OF THOSE CALLED TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD	 pag. 68
 ENTHRONEMENT OF THE BIBLE IN THE HOME	 pag. 72
 PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS	 pag. 79
 EDUCATIONAL SUGGESTIONS	 pag. 80
<i>The great witnesses</i>	pag. 80
<i>The burning questions</i>	pag. 81
<i>The way of beauty</i>	pag. 81
<i>The multi-coloured world of the web</i>	pag. 82
 RECREATIONAL SUGGESTIONS	 pag. 83
<i>Quizzes and marathons</i>	pag. 83
<i>Dramatizations and performances</i>	pag. 83
<i>For children</i>	pag. 85
 THE LOGO	 pag. 87



TO MARY
woman of listening

Mary, woman of listening, open our ears;
grant us to know how to listen to the word of your Son Jesus
among the thousands of words of this world;
grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live,
to every person we encounter, especially those
who are poor, in need, in hardship.

Mary, woman of decision,
illuminate our mind and our heart,
so that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus;
give us the courage to decide,
not to let ourselves be dragged along,
letting others direct our life.

Mary, woman of action,
obtain that our hands and feet move “with haste” toward others,
to bring them the charity and love of your Son Jesus,
to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did.
Amen.

Pope Francis

*A valuable resource to experience
the Sunday of the Word of God
with Pope Francis
and the whole Church.*