



Sunday of the Word of God: making the Scriptures part of our everyday lives



A press conference in the Vatican details the many aspects of the newly established 'Sunday of the Word of God' to be marked on 26 January. Pope Francis will celebrated Holy Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for the occasion.

By Linda Bordoni

Pope Francis is inviting Catholics across the world to deepen their appreciation, love and faithful witness to God and his Word.

That's why, as established by a papal decree - the third Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 26 this year, is to be observed as a special day devoted to "the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God".

As Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization explained during a press conference on Friday, it is an initiative that the Pope has entrusted to the whole Church so that "the Christian community may concentrate on the great value that the Word of God occupies in its daily existence" (*Aperuit illis 2*).

An opportunity to renew commitment and understanding

Fisichella said the occasion offers Christians an opportunity to renew their commitment and understanding of "the inexhaustible richness that comes from God's constant dialogue with his people."

He said it foresees a host of creative initiatives "that will stimulate believers to be living instruments of transmission of the Word," and comes in the wake of the many different pastoral initiatives spurred by the 2008 Synod on the Word of God that aimed to increase and enhance the knowledge, diffusion, reflection and study of Sacred Scripture.

The Archbishop mentioned a series of projects and programmes that have been launched across the globe since that Synod, to learn to pray with the Bible and to make the Word accessible in different languages and formats.

He said that by establishing this Day, the Pope intended "to respond to the many requests that have come from the people of God, so that throughout the Church the Sunday of the Word of God may be celebrated in unity of purpose".

Ecumenical value

He underlined the great ecumenical value that this Sunday possesses as it falls close to the Day of Dialogue between Jews and Catholics and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

As with other initiatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, Fisichella said this too has a characteristic logo that is immediately identifiable and may provide inspiration for a catechesis that helps to understand the meaning of the celebration of this Sunday.

Vatican II Lectionary to be enthroned

Noting that Pope Francis will celebrate Holy Mass on Sunday of the Word of God, he revealed that at the beginning of the Liturgy "there will be the solemn enthronement of the Lectionary that was used in all the sessions of the Second Vatican Council."

At the conclusion of the Eucharistic celebration, he said that in a symbolic gesture the Pope will give a Bible to 40 people representing "different expressions" of our daily life: "from the bishop to the foreigner, from the priest to the catechist, from the consecrated person to the policeman, from the Ambassadors of various continents to teachers of all grades, from the poor to journalists, from the 'Gendarme' to the prisoner serving a life sentence".

A representative of the Orthodox Churches and of Evangelical Communities will also receive a Bible from the Pope.

Pope Francis, Fisichella concluded, wants to make sure everyone is entrusted with the Word of God:

"This Sunday, he wants to stimulate all Christians not just to place the Bible on the shelf as one of many books, perhaps filled with dust, but as an instrument that awakens our faith."