

SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

26 JANUARY 2025

LITURGICAL AND PASTORAL HANDBOOK

I HOPE IN YOUR WORD

(Ps 119:74)



DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD



PONTIFICIUM A. D. MIGRORUM
PEREGRINANTES
IN SPEM

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INTRODUCTION

H.E. Archbishop Rino Fisichella

Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization

Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World

To live out the *Sixth Sunday of the Word of God*, which will be celebrated throughout the Church this coming 26 January 2025, Pope Francis has chosen as the theme the words of the Psalmist, **"I hope in your Word"** (Ps. 119:74). It is a cry of hope: man, in a moment of anguish, tribulation, and confusion, cries out to God and puts all his hope in him.

It is a deeply human experience, as is usually found in the Psalter. Everyone hopes, we all have hopes, but what is communicated to us in this Jubilee is a "Hope," in the singular. It is not an abstract idea or naive optimism, but a person, alive and present in everyone's life: Christ crucified and risen, the only one who never abandons us. Pauline theology is extremely clear on this point: "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1).

This is a certainty that is placed on our path. In it we must grow without ever looking away from God's faithfulness: "Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy." (Heb. 10:23) The fact that God is faithful to his promises returns like a refrain from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and because of this we can be filled with joy and confidence. Being a certainty of the fulfillment of the promise, Christian hope "does not disappoint" because it is given to us by the efficacious presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5). This is why we can hope in his Word. The apostle Peter understood this well when he stated, "at your command I will lower the nets." (Lk. 5:5), which really means, "I trust in you." The hope that flows from this Word arises from the assurance of faith and entrusts us to God's love, who never contradicts himself or the promise made.

A jubilee that knocks on the door every 25 years and prompts us to take life seriously, offers the opportunity to keep our eyes fixed on the hope that evangelical realism brings. The *Sunday of the Word of God* once again allows Christians to reinvigorate Jesus' tenacious invitation to listen to and cherish his Word in order to offer the world a witness of hope that allows one to move beyond the difficulties of the present moment. The Word of God is not confined to a book, but remains ever alive and becomes a concrete and tangible sign. In fact, it challenges every community not only to proclaim the same faith as always, but above all to communicate it with the conviction that it brings hope to those who listen to it and welcome it with a simple heart.

Each local reality will be able to find the most suitable and effective ways to live this *Sunday* to the fullest, helping "[God's] people to grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the sacred Scriptures" (*Aperuit illis*, 15). This Pastoral Handbook is intended as an aid to be offered to parish communities and those gathered for the celebration of Sunday's Holy Eucharist, so that this *Sunday* may be lived intensely, as an integral part of the Jubilee of 2025, whose motto is *Pilgrims of Hope*.

THE WORD OF GOD: A SOURCE OF HOPE

Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori OCist

Abbot General of the Cistercian Order

Perhaps the man who best understood the relationship between God's word and hope was a pagan, the Roman centurion who, after pleading with Jesus to heal his sick servant, in the face of the Lord's immediate willingness declared himself unworthy for him to go to his house and said to him, "only say the word and my servant will be healed" (Mt. 8:8). One word from Christ was enough for him to have a sure hope in the salvation He had wrought.

Faith enabled the centurion to understand that what arouses hope in God's word is that it is, indeed, a word of God, that is, the word that He who makes all things personally addresses our need for salvation and eternal life. Peter also understood this at a time that could have been one of despair because everyone had abandoned the Lord and only a few awkward and insecure disciples remained with Him,

can surrender to the One who speaks it with total confidence?

This is possible if the word of the Lord reaches the heart not as a promise of something but as a promise of someone, and of someone who loves our lives with an all-powerful love, who can do everything for those who love and trust in Him.

Many abandoned Jesus after the bread of life message in the synagogue at Capernaum, saying, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" (Jn. 6:60). How come Jesus' word was a reason for them to leave when for Peter and the other disciples it was the only reason to stay with Him?

The fact is that the former had heard his word by separating it from its source, Christ himself.

the word of the Lord reaches the heart not as a promise of something but as a promise of someone

"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). The words of Jesus remained for Peter and his companions as the last thread of hope in a fullness of life they could only hope for from God.

But why and how could Peter's hope, like that of the centurion, cling to the word of Christ? What gives the word of the Lord this power, this solidity whereby we can surrender to it with the full weight of our lives in danger of sliding into despair, death, nothingness? What enables those who hear this word to recognize that we

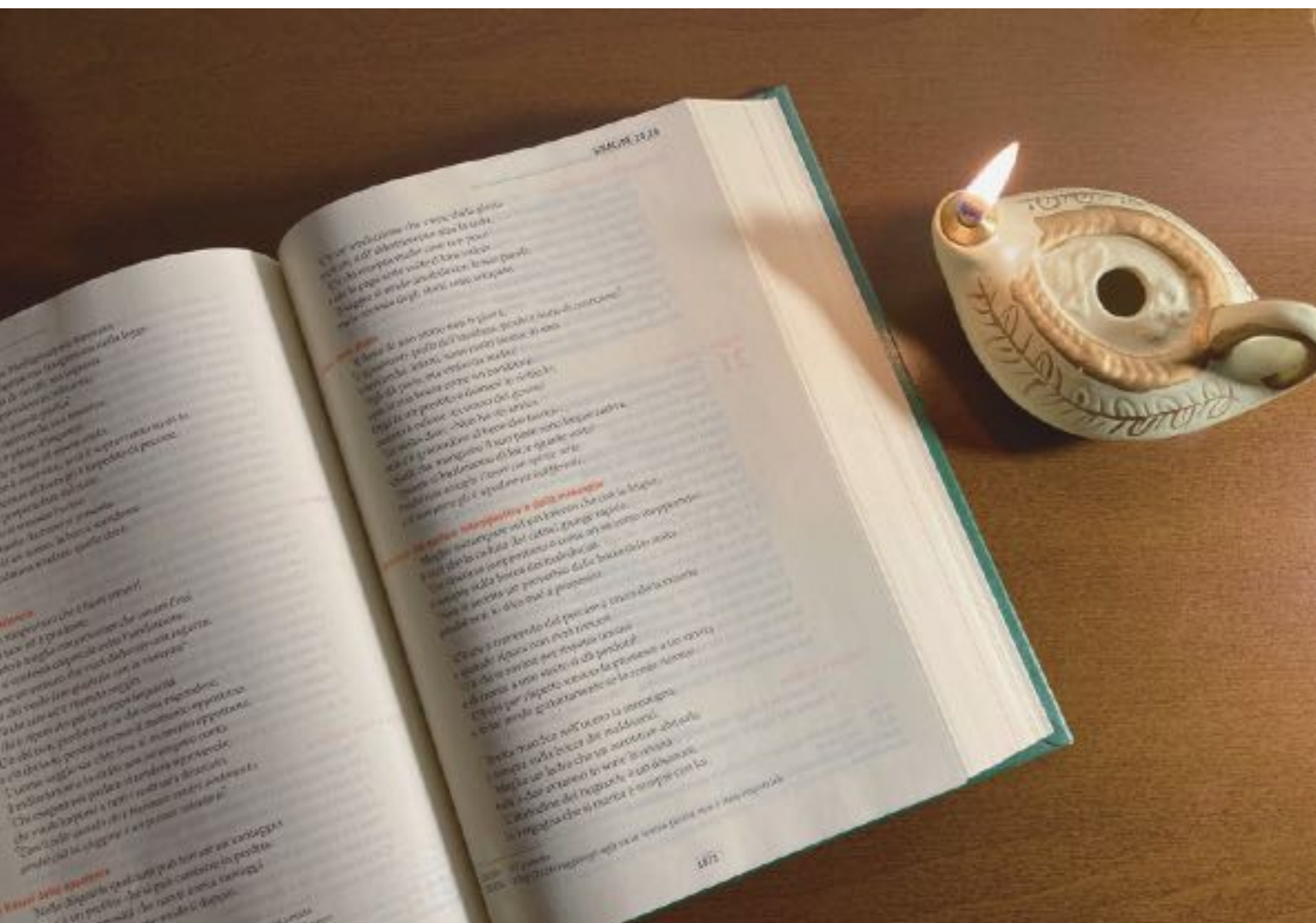
Peter and the disciples, on the other hand, could not abstract any word of Jesus from his presence, that is, from their relationship with him, from his friendship.

God's word can be a source of hope if for us God remains the source of the word itself. Only if we hear the word from the voice of the present Word, who looks upon us with love, can it nourish in us an unshakable hope, because it is founded on a presence that never fails. God's word is a promise in which not only the one who promises is faithful, but remains

included in the promise itself, because Christ promises us himself. "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20). Jesus' last word, the last promise before he ascends into heaven, is the promise of himself to our lives, not only at the end of time but every day, every moment of our lives.

This indelible link of God's word with his presence, so radical from the time "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn. 1:14) until he died on the cross for us, is the sense and promise of the entire Old Testament. As when Psalm 27 cries out to the Lord, "if you are silent to me, I shall be like those who go down to the Pit" (Ps. 27:1). Man has within him the deep, ontological awareness that if God does not speak to him, if God does not create him at every moment with his word, death, the dissolution of life, is inevitable for him, because God creates by saying everything in the Word through whom all things exist (cf. Jn. 1:3).

One can live without listening to the Word who creates him with love, but in this way he or she experiences, as so many do today, an inconsistent life, a dissipated life, escaping from our hands, unable to hold it. Instead, we are given the grace to live by listening, to live ready to listen to the Lord who is constantly at the door of our freedom, knocking and asking to enter. We are granted to live in an infinite friendship by listening to his voice, which calls us to communion with him (cf. Rev. 3:20), thus allowing the Spirit to generate in us and among us a new life, overflowing with hope, not in something, but in God who fulfills the promise of his presence at the very instant his word expresses it.



"I HOPE IN YOUR WORD"

(PS 119:74) - LECTIO DIVINA

Prof. Rosalba Manes

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HOPING IN THE WORD THAT DOES NOT DISAPPOINT (PS 119:74)

Psalms 119 (according to the Hebrew tradition) or 118 (according to the Greco-Latin tradition) is unique: an *alphabetical acrostic* of 176 verses, constructed according to the Hebrew alphabet, consisting of 22 letters. Each stanza corresponds to a letter of that alphabet, and the first word of the 8 verses of the stanza begins with that letter.

The central theme of this Psalm is the *Torah* of the Lord, understood as "teaching," "command," "promise," as "signs" for a successful and fulfilled life. *Torah* is revelation, it is God's Word knocking at the human heart and longing for a response. It invokes a listening that transforms into trusting and creative obedience, dynamic and generous love. Thus, Psalm 119 celebrates the vividness, beauty, consoling power and saving power of God's Word, which is the secret of a happy existence and the gateway to authentic beatitude.

The Psalmist considers God's Word to be the "joy of [his] heart" (v. 111) and his "portion/heritage" (vv. 57, 111). Therefore he hopes on this Word (v. 74). This Word, which is truth and command, also represents a promise, the promise of the eternal presence at our side of the divine Eternal I-with-you. This is why the Word of the Lord is trusted (v. 42), loved (v. 97) and requires hope (v. 74), that hope that "does not disappoint" (Rom. 5:5), for every word of the Lord is destined to be fulfilled with certainty. This is why the Jubilee year can be a favourable time to rediscover the therapeutic and liberating power of the Psalms and the Psalter in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.

IN CONVERSATION WITH GOD

The Psalms bear witness to the human desire to speak by intercepting a *You* who is strongly available to collect outbursts, tears, disappointments, existential derailments: the Creator God, Liberator, Providence, in short, the Eternal I-with-You. The set of Psalms (*Sefer tehillim* for our Jewish brethren and *Psalter* for us Christians) testifies to the thirst for the eternal that dwells in the human heart and drives it to narrate and entrust to God all that it experiences. Man turns to God not because he is compelled by duty but because he freely and strongly desires him. This longing arises from his freedom and willingness to relate to God, certain of his desire to allow himself to be found.

The Psalms, counted among the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, document the special confidence between man and the God who "has ears and hears, who has a mouth and speaks," unlike the idols of the nations (cf. Ps. 115:5-6; 135:16-17). The protagonist of this collection is *prayer*, an experience of deep intimacy with God. The collection of Psalms attests to us how human speech, transfigured by contact with the ear of God that receives it, has become the *true word of God*.

DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES TO CONVERSE WITH GOD

Man turns to God in every situation in life to

1. call upon him and reproach him for not being present in his life as he would expect;
2. make him share in his discoveries, successes and everything that happens to him, whether a joyful event or a painful experience;

3. ask him for help after experiencing that no one else can come to his rescue;
4. express his gratitude for the mark of beauty he beholds in creation;
5. contemplating God's free and decisive intervention in his personal history and for his ability to turn everything to good, even evil.

THE PSALMS: THE STORY OF ISRAEL IN POETRY AND PRAYER

In the Psalms we encounter hymns of praise and thanksgiving; lamentations or supplications arising from the situation of suffering of the individual praying or of the whole community of Israel; meditations on the history of salvation; sapiential reflections on the gift of the Word and the quality of human action; requests for forgiveness, deliverance, and healing; invocations for help or revenge against enemies. Drawing on the collective imagination and the symbols that characterize the poetry of all ages, it can be said that *the Psalms are the expression of the religious soul of Israel translated into poetry and prayer*; they were the prayer of Jesus and are the prayer of the disciples and disciples of all times; they are the backbone of the *liturgy of the hours* in the Catholic Church; they inspire antiphons and a great many liturgical songs. They lyrically read all the stages of covenant history: the promise, the exodus, the gift of the law, the entry into the promised land, the liturgy in the temple in Jerusalem, the celebrations of the great feasts and pilgrimages, the enthronement of kings, the humiliation of exile and the joy of return. There are also a number of Psalms, composed to celebrate the figure of the Davidic king, which later became, for the people of Israel, celebrations of hope in the promised and expected Messiah.

AN INFLUENTIAL BOOK WITH A MUSICAL ORIGIN

The Psalms number one hundred and fifty and are esteemed by the religious tradition of Israel as the quintessential prayers, as indicated by the term *tehillim* ("prayers") in the Hebrew Bible. The ancient Greek version of the Septuagint (LXX) calls these compositions *psalmoi* and *psalterion*, from which the English terms "psalms" and "psalter" are derived. The word "psalm" should most likely be linked to a stringed instrument employed to guide the prayers of the assembly with music. The original melodies, used

The truth celebrated in the Psalms is the assurance of God's faithfulness

in the temple liturgy in Jerusalem, however, have been lost.

YOU ARE WITH ME!

The truth celebrated in the Psalms is the *assurance of God's faithfulness*. In Psalm 33:4 "trustworthy" is the description for God's works. This trustworthiness is related to the fact that God's love is always "around" in man's life. God is a loving presence that remains so even when man perceives him to be distant. This is clearly seen in Psalm 23, the *Shepherd's Psalm*: even as man passes through the valley of the shadow of death he feels this profession of faith surface in his heart: "I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Ps. 23:4).

THE ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST

Many of the Psalms are permeated by trust as a vital expression of religious experience and dynamic interpersonal relationships, and they are called *psalms of trust* because they contain verbs such as "take refuge," "trust," "wait," and "hope." But trust is the "atmosphere" of all the Psalms because the basis of these compositions is the conviction that trust in God makes every other certainty and support pale in comparison. The prayerful person who has experienced the disappointment of the ways of self-salvation and reliance on human means and supports, in "lifting up his eyes to the mountains" (cf. Ps. 121:1) has discovered the anchor of trust. This trust belongs not only to the individual but is also expressed by the group, as in Psalm 22:27, where it speaks of the "poor" or little ones of the Lord (*'ānāwîm*), a movement that arose in the fifth century B.C. around the ideal of faithfulness to the Lord and his *Torah* (Law) and which, in conflict with the upper classes, preferred trust in the Lord. A movement that waits to encompass us, too, if we are ready to say with faith, hope and love, "Those who fear you rejoice to see me, because I hope in your word." (Ps. 119:74).



JUBILEE OF THE WORLD OF COMMUNICATIONS

24-26 january 2025

Friday 24 January

- h 17:30-19:00** Welcome and Penitential Liturgy
- h 19:00** Mass in the Basilica of St. John Lateran

Saturday 25 January

- h 8:00-9:30** Pilgrimage to the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica
- h 9:00-10:00** Welcome in Atrium of the Paul VI Audience Hall
- h 10:00** "In dialogue with Maria Ressa and Colum McCann". Moderator: Mario Calabrese in Paul VI Audience Hall
- h 12:30** Meeting with the Holy Father in Paul VI Audience Hall
- h 15:00-16:30** Dialogue with the city: meetings with cultural and spiritual content

Sunday 26 January

- h 10:00** Holy Mass for the "Sunday of the Word of God" presided over by the Holy Father in St. Peter's Basilica with institution of new lectors

Registration deadline
24 November 2024

**REGISTER FOR
THE EVENT**



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DICASTERIUM PRO EVANGELIZATIONE
SECTIO DE QUARTORIBUS FUNDAMENTALIBUS
EVANGELIZATIONIS IN MUNDO

THE JUBILEE INDULGENCE

The Jubilee is an opportune time to receive the grace of Indulgence, "the fullness of God's forgiveness, which knows no bounds" (Bull *Spes non confundit*, 23).



Conditions required to receive this gift of Plenary Indulgence:

- purification through the sacrament of penance
- the support of Holy Communion
- prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions

In addition to:

- a pilgrimage to a holy place, to at least one of the four Major Papal Basilicas or to any Jubilee site
- or*
- some work of mercy or penance

One can stand in solidarity with those who have gone before us, offering up, in prayerful intercession, this grace for the souls in Purgatory.

* kindly refer to the specific indications found in the document "Decree on the Granting of Indulgence during the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 called by His Holiness Pope Francis" by the Apostolic Penitentiary.

PASTORAL PROPOSALS



PREPARING THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

To actively experience the *Sunday of the Word of God* it is important that preparations extend from the spiritual level (personal and community prayer) to the material level (adequate planning). Indeed, fostering an encounter with God in His Word requires adequate spiritual preparation, calling for openness of heart for those to whom the Word will be proclaimed. Accordingly, preparations for planning the initiative call for starting with individual and communal prayer. Suggestions:

- A week before the *Sunday of the Word of God*, include an intention dedicated to this goal in the prayer of the faithful.
- Provide a time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the community, offered for the celebration of the *Sunday of the Word of God*.
- Have moments of Biblical Catechesis.



LIVING OUT THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Celebrate this Sunday's Mass in a solemn way, according to Pope Francis' request. In fact, the most favourable place of encounter between the Christian community and the Word of God is the Eucharistic celebration. The Apostolic Letter *Aperuit illis*, No. 3, outlines some suggestions:

- It will be important that the sacred text can be enthroned in the Eucharistic celebration so that the normative value that the Word of God possesses is made evident to the assembly.
- On this Sunday, especially, it will be helpful to highlight its proclamation and adapt the homily to emphasize the service that is rendered to the Word of the Lord.
- On this Sunday, the Bishops could celebrate the rite of institution of the Ministry of Catechists and also Lector, to recall the importance of the proclamation of the Word of God in the liturgy.
- The parish priests could find ways of distributing the Bible, or one of its books, to the whole assembly so as to bring out the importance of continuing the daily reading, deepening and prayer with Sacred Scripture, with a special emphasis on *Lectio divina*.
- Make special reference in the Prayer of the Faithful to Christian unity, since celebrating the *Sunday of the Word of God* expresses ecumenical significance.



THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE YEAR

It is important to remember that the carrying out of the program is not the ultimate purpose of this *Sunday*. Rather, we need to foster an ongoing personal and community encounter with the Word of God. We know well that listening, sharing, living and proclaiming the Word of God is not a one-day task, but a task to undertake for our whole life. It might help to promote various Bible initiatives throughout the year and provide an opportunity for ongoing formation of the faithful.

Formation for Lectors

It is essential that church communities engage in training the faithful who carry out the task of lectors in Liturgical Celebrations, so that they may be true proclaimers of the Word with adequate preparation, as is now customary for acolytes or extraordinary ministers of Communion.

Carrying the Word "in your pocket"

Thus, Pope Francis suggests, "[M]ay you have the habit of always carrying a small Gospel in your pocket, in your bag, to be able to read it during the day". There are several editions of the New Testament or the Gospel, in handy little volumes, pocket versions, that easily fit in our bags or backpacks and that we can carry with us at all times.

Carrying the Word in your cellphone

One can easily have the Bible in their cell phone to consult it at any time. There are different apps and web sites in different languages, not only with the Bible but also with the Holy Mass readings for each day, pages where to read or listen to the Word of God, pages with commentaries and reflections of the same. One can also use notifications as a reminder to have a moment a day to encounter God's Word so that it accompanies us wherever we go.

Bible Group

A group could be organized in the church community, on a weekly or monthly basis, that organizes formative or cultural moments of in-depth study of Sacred Scripture, and community *Lectio divina* moments. The meetings should be adapted according to the characteristics of the group (age group, spiritual maturity, etc.).

Meditated Rosary

Another source for praying with Scripture is the variety of traditional Catholic prayers, such as the Rosary. It is an evangelical prayer with a distinct Christological orientation, defined by St. John Paul II as a "compendium of the Gospel." In fact, it has an essentially contemplative character, since it leads us into the meditation of the mysteries of the Lord's life, accompanied by the one who was closest to the Lord. To give biblical foundation and greater depth to the meditation, it is helpful if the announcement of the mystery is followed by the proclamation of a corresponding biblical passage. It is appropriate that after the announcing of the mystery and the proclamation of the Word, one should pause for a suitable period of time to fix one's gaze on the meditated mystery, before beginning the vocal prayer (cf. Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, No. 30-31)

BIBLICAL ADORATION

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

This text is a proposal that should be later concretized and adapted to cultural contexts according to local traditions.

Having gathered the faithful and begun a song, the minister goes to the Tabernacle, takes the Blessed Sacrament and places it in the monstrance. Then, kneeling, he incenses the Blessed Sacrament.

C./ Lord, we contemplate Your real presence in this Blessed Sacrament and thank You for calling us to be before You. We gather together trusting in You and in Your Word. Prepare our minds and hearts to receive the graces You have prepared for us at this time. Make us aware at all times that we are before You and Your infinite love. Open our minds and wills to receive Your Word and proclaim it with our lives.

C./ O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine.

R./ All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment Thine.

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth". (Jn. 1:14)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be ...

C./ O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine.

R./ All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment Thine.

"They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'" (Lk. 24:32)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be ...

C./ O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine.

R./ All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment Thine.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:19-20)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be ...

L./ Let us listen and embrace the Word of God, always alive and effective. Let it resonate within us and enlighten our lives.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Lord Jesus, help us understand the Scriptures;
set our hearts on fire as you speak to us. (cf. Lk. 24:32)

Alleluia.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke (5:1-11)

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Guided Reflection:

L./ As part of the *Sunday of the Word of God* we celebrate this time of adoration, which this year is inspired by the verse: "*I hope in your Word*" (Ps 119:74). Let us reflect before Jesus in the Eucharist

1. John begins his Gospel saying "the Word became flesh" (1:14). In Jesus, the invisible God became seen and heard. How many words and actions of Jesus could the apostles hear and see! Many of these have been recorded in the Gospels, where we can contemplate Jesus through his Word. Jesus continues to speak to us and continues to act in our lives.

(moment of silence between each point)

2. God wants to enter into a personal, intimate relationship with us. Jesus touched the hearts of so many of those who had an encounter with Him in the Gospel. These people understood that having a friendship relationship with Jesus means trusting in His word, recognizing that He alone has the words of eternal life (cf. Jn. 6:68), even despite it not always being easy to understand His way of doing things, neither for the disciples nor for us today. We see this in Peter, when he says to Jesus, "we have worked all night long but have caught nothing." Nevertheless, there was something in Him that encouraged trust, inspired confidence and gave rise to hope in His Word: "if you say so, I will let down the nets." "Peter and the other apostles found only in Him the answer to the thirst for life, thirst for joy, thirst for love that animates them. It is only thanks to Him that they experienced the fullness of life they seek." (Papa Francesco, *Angelus*, 25 August 2024)

3. It is also not easy for us to follow Jesus in trust and surrender to his word. Sometimes we experience his silence, the contradictions of life, the sufferings that give rise to fear and distrust of God in us. However, if we stay close to Him, if we put ourselves in His hands and repeat "Jesus, I trust in You," we experience the beauty of having Him as our Friend, and we realize that He does not disappoint us. Hope in God never disappoints (cf. Rom. 5:5).

4. "We need Jesus, to be with him, to be nourished at his table, on his words of eternal life!" (Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 23 August 2015). Let us allow Him to speak His Word to us today. His speech is always spoken with love and transforming authority: "only say the word" as the Roman centurion said. Just one! He had a word for Levi at that table; one for Zacchaeus on the Sycamore; one for Peter, James and John by the sea; one for Mary outside the tomb... He has one for us, too. Let us let Him speak to our hearts and let us abide and dwell in His Word, and in Him let us put all our hope.

Personal Prayer

This moment of silence could be accompanied by appropriate music.

Prayerful silence

Hymn

Community Prayer

L./ You who were contemplated by the shepherds and magi in Bethlehem...

R./ Let me discover you in my life, Lord. (cf. Mt. 2:11)

L./ You who showed Your glory on Tabor...

R./ Let me enjoy the joys of each day, Lord. (cf. Mt. 17:1ff)

L./ You who called Your disciples to the lake shore...

R./ Let me also hear your call, Lord. (cf. Mt. 4:18-22)

L./ You who saw the resourcefulness of Zacchaeus...

R./ Let me offer you my efforts, Lord. (cf. Lk. 19:1ff)

L./ You who by touching the deaf showed them your closeness...

R./ Let me receive your Word. (cf. Mk. 7:33)

L./ You who changed the whole perspective of Matthew's life...

R./ Fill my life with meaning, Lord. (cf. Mt. 9:9-13)

L./ You who, turning toward Lazarus, brought him back to life...

R./ Encourage my fervour and desire for holiness, Lord. (cf. Jn. 11:1ff)

L./ You who, explaining the scriptures to your disciples along the way, turned their sadness into joy...

R./ Enkindle in us a love for your Word and the certainty of your presence. (cf. Lk. 24:13-35)

Hymn

Our Father

C./ We thank you Lord because you are always near us, especially in the Eucharist and in your Word. At all times we want to turn to You, Word of Eternal Life, to welcome You with faith and simplicity, to share You with others with enthusiasm, to live Your Word in daily life and to proclaim You with courage. With the confidence of sons and daughters and in your own words we dare to say: *Our Father*...

Benediction

At the end of adoration, the priest or deacon goes to the altar; Tantum ergo or another appropriate hymn is sung. Meanwhile, kneeling, the minister incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Then he rises and says:

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,
who in the wondrous sacrament of the Eucharist
you have left us the memorial of your Passover,
help us adore with living faith
the holy mystery of your body and blood,
that we may always feel in ourselves the benefits of redemption.
You who live and reign forever and ever.

R./ Amen.

Having said the prayer, the priest or deacon puts on the white humeral veil, takes the monstrance or pyx and makes the sign of the cross over the people with the Blessed Sacrament, without saying anything.

The Divine Praises

If deemed appropriate, according to local custom, the Divine Praises may be said after the Eucharistic blessing:

Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints.

Reposition

When the blessing is over, the priest or deacon who gave the blessing, or another priest or deacon, places the Blessed Sacrament back in the tabernacle and genuflects.

OUTLINE FOR THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

Some liturgical suggestions for the Celebration of the Mass are proposed, however, and at the discretion of the local bishop and the pastor, other gestures may be introduced that emphasize the importance of the Word of God in the celebrating community - in accordance with the current liturgical directions regarding the celebration of the Eucharist.

The ambo may be adorned and the lit Easter candle placed beside it. Next to the altar, or the ambo, or in another specially prepared place (e.g. a chapel), prepare a place visible to the whole assembly, elevated and adorned, where the sacred text can be placed. On another table, arrange the Bibles that will be given to the different representatives of the parish community.

It should be understood that, in the Mass, the table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ is prepared. The ambo is connected to the altar in that the Word announced from the ambo becomes "flesh" on the altar. One can, rightly, speak of "two tables": that of the Word and that of the Eucharist.

Mass begins as usual - if possible, with the solemn procession with the censer, the incense boat, the cross and the candles, and carrying the Book of the Gospels according to the liturgical customs of the Roman Church. The deacon (in his absence, the presbyter may perform the same sign) processionally carries the Book of the Gospels, holding it somewhat elevated, if possible also accompanied by two lit candles. Upon reaching the chancel, the Book of the Gospels is placed on the altar in the centre.

Being placed on the altar gives the Book of the Gospels an exceptional honor. Since the altar is Christ himself, only the Eucharist and the Book of the Gospels enjoy the privilege of being placed on it. This placement is equivalent to an enthronement and to the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This gesture, reserved for the sacred text, is meant to express the inner disposition of the faithful: the Word of God comes and takes the central place in the assembly.

After the initial greeting the penitential act is introduced with these or similar words:

C./ Today the Church is celebrating the *Sunday of the Word of God*. It is a Sunday "devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God" (*Aperuit Illis*, 3). Let us open our minds and hearts to welcome the Word that is "a lamp for [our] feet, a light for [our] path" (cf. Ps. 118:105). God, through his Word, desires to reveal himself and dwell in our beings. So that we may welcome his presence during this celebration, let us acknowledge that we are sinners and confidently invoke God's mercy. .

PENITENTIAL ACT

The penitential act follows, which could be the following:

C./ Lord, you are the Word of God made flesh, *Kyrie eleison*

R./ *Kyrie eleison*

C./ Christ, you restore sight to the blind by the power of your word, *Christe eleison*

R./ *Christe eleison*

C./ Lord, you free our lives from sin, *Kyrie eleison*

R./ *Kyrie eleison*

C./ May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

R./ Amen.

The Gloria is sung and then the Liturgy of the Word begins as usual.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Since proclaiming the Word takes on the value of a salvific event in which salvation history is made present, great care should be taken in proclaiming the Word of God. It is not a mere reading of the text, but rather the proclamation of a presence; it is God who makes known his saving work. Thus, the reader is the primary mediator of God's Word, the one who must help the liturgical assembly to receive its message and to guard it in order to translate it into life.

The Lectionary is the liturgical book that collects all of the Word of God proclaimed in the Eucharistic celebrations. The Lectionary should therefore be dignified, decorated and beautiful, capable of evoking the sense of God speaking to His people. For this reason, substitute pastoral aids, such as "pamphlets," are not suitable for the proclamation of the Word of God; they should be intended for the faithful only for personal preparation and meditation on the readings. The liturgical book itself, should be like the epiphany of God's beauty in the midst of his people.

For the proclamation of the Gospel, the Book of the Gospels is taken from the altar to the ambo in procession, where it is incensed. During the "Gospel Acclamation" the incense-bearer goes to the seat, for the infusion of incense; he will then go, with the deacon or president, to the ambo for incensing and for the proclamation. It would be good to proclaim the initial greeting and proclamation, "A reading from the holy Gospel..." (and the final one, "The Gospel of the Lord") in song to emphasize the importance of what is being read. If the celebration is presided over by the bishop, at the end of the proclamation, the presbyter or deacon will bring the Book of the Gospels for the bishop to kiss. It is good that on this occasion the celebrant also imparts the blessing to the people.

"When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel" (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, No. 29). When the presbyter or deacon takes up the Book of the Gospels from the altar, it is meant to signify that the following words being read are not their own, but those of Jesus, Lord of history and of the Church. The proclamation of the Gospel should be given the utmost attention; for this reason, it is good to precede it with incensation.

ENTHRONEMENT OF THE WORD OF GOD

At the end of the reading of the Gospel the minister kisses the sacred text and then takes it in procession to the throne, where it is placed, opened and incensed. The throne can have candles, flowers or plant pots.

A commentator explains the gesture with these or similar words:

The book containing the Word of God is solemnly carried and placed on the throne. It is a symbolic gesture in which we not only raise the Holy Scripture in the midst of our praying community, but it also expresses our willingness to put it first in our lives. Thus, the Word of God becomes the beacon of our lives that illuminates our decisions and inspires our actions according to God's will.

During the great Ecumenical Councils, the tradition arose of laying the Book of the Gospels on a small throne, to accentuate the primacy of the Word of God. This also happened at the Second Vatican Council.

HOMILY

HANDING OUT THE BIBLE

At the end of the homily, the Bible (or one of its books such as, for example, one of the Gospels) may be handed out to all those present (or only to some). After a brief moment of meditative silence, the celebrant says the introduction:

C./ Beloved, the evangelist John reminds us, "[T]his is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ." (Jn. 17:3). We too, want to know God who has revealed himself through his Word. Therefore, we want to receive the Word, feeling the importance of its daily reading, in order to live more and more united with Christ Jesus. For this we now address our prayer to God.

After a brief moment of silent prayer, the celebrant, with arms extended, recites:

C./ Father of light,
e praise you and bless you
For all the signs of your love.
You have made these children of yours to be born again
By water and the Holy Spirit
In the womb of Mother Church
And now you call them to listen and proclaim the Word that saves.

May Jesus Christ who is your Word made man,
Lead them to the knowledge of the mystery
That is concealed from the learned and the intelligent
And revealed to little ones.

Grant that they may open their hearts
To understand the meaning of the Holy Scriptures.
Let them become living witnesses to the Gospel,
Which they will read from these books.

May Mary, Mother of Wisdom, intercede for them,
Who first received into her womb
The Word made flesh.

May your Holy Spirit grant each of us
The grace to collaborate in simplicity and joy
For the proclamation of your Word, to the glory of your name.
Through Christ our Lord.

R./ Amen.

The celebrant goes to the table where the texts to be handed out are arranged, takes them and distributes them to the faithful. As he hands over the text, he says:

C./ Receive the Holy Scriptures, read, proclaim and witness to God's Word with joy.

The response:

R./ Amen.

After the distribution of the texts is finished, the Mass proceeds as usual with the Creed and the Prayer of the Faithful.

Handing out the Bible to the faithful becomes an act of entrustment, in which the Word of God surrenders itself into the hands of man, who henceforth is responsible for receiving and passing it on. To pass it on, one must first receive it. Otherwise, one becomes a "futile preacher outwardly of God's word, who isn't also inwardly a listener." (Saint Augustine, *Serm.* 179,1).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

The following prayer of the faithful could be used, modifying it according to the needs of the community:

C./ Dear brothers and sisters, gathered together to celebrate the mysteries of our redemption, we beseech Almighty God, that through his Word, our path to holiness may be renewed. Let us pray together and say:
Make us, O Lord, heralds of your Word!

1. For the Pope, bishops and priests, that they may love the Word of God more and more each day and, meditating on it deeply, may joyfully share it with the people entrusted to them. We pray to the Lord.
2. For the readers and catechists who will receive their ministry today, that as they deepen their understanding of the Word of God each day, they may be configured with it and convey it by the witness of their lives. We pray to the Lord.
3. For parents, so that enlightened and strengthened by God's Word, they may have the wisdom to guide their children, passing on faith in Christ to them. We pray to the Lord.
4. For the entire Christian community listening to God gathered around his Word, that it may grow in unity and bear authentic witness to God's love. We pray to the Lord.
5. For the Church, called to be united in Christ, that in listening to Sacred Scripture it may discover the path to an authentic and stable unity. We pray to the Lord.
6. For each of us that we may open our hearts to the Word of God and thus work together every day to build peace. We pray to the Lord.

C./ Hear O merciful Father, these prayers which we offer you in faith through your Son, the Word made flesh, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen

Holy Mass continues as usual.

SOLEMN BENEDICTION

The priest extends his hands and says:

C./ May God, who has revealed his truth and charity in Christ,
make you apostles of the Gospel
and witnesses of his love in the world.

R./ Amen.

C./ May the Lord Jesus, who promised his Church
to be present until the end of the ages,
guide your steps and strengthen your words.

R./ Amen.

C./ May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you,
that as you walk the streets of the world
you may evangelize the poor and heal the contrite of heart.

R./ Amen.

Bless all present saying:

C./ And upon all you here present,
May the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son,
+ and the Holy Spirit come down on you and remain with you forever.

R./ Amen.



I HOPE IN YOUR WORD

(PS 119:74)

26 January 2025

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