

SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD – 24th January 2021

Last December, the Congregation for Divine Worship issued a note reminding us that the third Sunday of Ordinary Time is now **The Sunday of the Word of God** as established by Pope Francis. They suggest that, despite the restrictions upon us, we use the Book of the Gospels in particular this Sunday. Why not use it every Sunday and Solemnity?

‘Through the proclaimed biblical readings in the liturgy, God speaks to his people and Christ himself proclaims his Gospel; Christ is the centre and fullness of all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments. Listening to the Gospel, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word, is characterised by a special veneration, expressed not only by gestures and acclamations, but by the Book of the Gospels itself. One of the ritual possibilities suitable for this Sunday could be the entrance procession with the Book of the Gospels or simply placing the Book of the Gospels on the altar.’

Pope Francis wanted “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). It takes place **during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, emphasising the important bond we have in Sacred Scripture with other Christian denominations and religious traditions.

In your parish, try to beautify the Books of the Word – so that visually they speak of the beauty of the God who speaks to us and that they look worthy to be kissed.

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. We can use incense to venerate it just before the Gospel is proclaimed. Consider using candles and a place of honour for the Gospel after it is proclaimed.

Pope Francis invites us to find “ways to mark this Sunday with a certain Solemnity” (*Aperuit illis* 3). Perhaps we can **invite people at home to take out their family Bible this day** and have it open in an honoured place in their home before them, with a candle beside it.

Some quotes you might find helpful:

'I am doing my duty, in obedience to Christ's command: "Search the scriptures" (*John 5:39*), and "ask and you will find" (*Matt 7:7*) so Christ will not say to me... "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (*Matt 22:29*). For if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the one who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.' *St Jerome, Prologue to the commentary of the Prophet Isaiah*

"There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God." *St John Paul II, Novo Millennio Ineunte*

"Allowing ourselves to be "wounded" by the word is indispensable for expressing verbally that which overflows from the heart... 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." *Pope Francis, 5th October 2017 Address to Church Relations Committee of the United Bible Societies*

Pope Francis' Prayer 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.

WOULD YOU LISTEN TO HIM?

The Transfiguration: *Matthew 17*

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³ Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

Reflection

The Transfiguration of Jesus gives us a glimpse of the glory of the kingdom. It helps us to rise above our human weakness and to live in hope and a sense of possibility with the reality of the cross in our daily lives. There is a strong emphasis in God’s Word about listening – let us listen together with open hearts and minds.

Would you listen to him when he says nice things to you - ‘Do not be afraid’ (Mt 14:28)– ‘You are the salt of the earth’ (Mt 5:13) or ‘You are the light of the world’ (Mt 5:14) – You are worth more than hundreds of sparrows’ (Mt 10:31) – **would you listen and take them to heart?**

Would you listen to him when he says hard things to you - about the hungry and the needy - ‘give them something to eat yourselves’ (Mt 14:16) – ‘give to anyone who asks’ (Mt 5:42) – or about forgiveness ‘not seven I tell you but seventy seven times’ (Mt 18:22) or ‘love your enemies’ (Mt 5:44) – or ‘Why did you doubt?’ (Mt 14:32) - **would you listen and respond?**

Would you listen to Him when he says words of hope to you – ‘anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it’ (Mt 16:25) – ‘where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them’ (Mt 18:20) – ‘the last will be first, and the first, last’ (Mt 20:16) - ‘Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them’ (Mt 5:7) – **would you listen and let Him transform you?**

Song

Listen

(Aniceto Nazareth)

(available on the Bonnybrook Parish You Tube channel)

Some Thoughts

Maybe you feel that the celebration of the Word of God in the Mass is a little rushed – too many words and not enough time to let it sink in. Pope Francis last year established a Sunday of the Word of God with the hope that this will help God’s people ‘to grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the sacred Scriptures.’”

This might be an incentive for communities to offer a deeper experience of God’s Word in a more reflective atmosphere on a day when the Eucharist is not celebrated.

‘Stressing how essential it is for Catholics to familiarize themselves with Christ’s written word, Pope Francis states that “a day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event.”

Looking after the Books: A Covid Project?

How do the liturgical books look as they are carried or used? People are more observant when participating in liturgies online – they see everything. The way we look after our books is a sign of our respect for them. Remember school days. The state of the schoolbooks sometimes paralleled our interest in the subject. *[photos from the Monastery of St Alphonsus]*

If the Bible
is so good why
isn't there a

Bible 2?

