

Celebration of the Opening of the Pauline Family's Year of the Bible

The Word, The Face, The Mandate

FIRST MOMENT

The Word Became Flesh

Upon entering the church, each person receives a small unlit candle. The church is semi-dark. The celebration opens with a song, sung softly.

Refrain: The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us. (*Repeat*)

*Jn. 1:1 is proclaimed in **Greek** (En archè en o lògos kài o lògos en pros ton theòn, kài theòs en o logos). A lamp is brought in while the refrain is repeated. A few moments of silence follow.*

Ref: The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us. (*Repeat*)

*Jn. 1:1 is proclaimed in **English** (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God) and in **Portuguese** (No princípio era a Palavra, e a Palavra estava com Deus, e a Palavra era Deus). Two other lamps are brought in while the refrain is repeated. A few moments of silence follow.*

Ref: The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us. (*Repeat*)

*Jn. 1:1 is proclaimed in **French** (Au commencement était le Verbe et le Verbe était auprès de Dieu et le Verbe était Dieu) and in **Spanish** (En el principio existia la Palabra, y la Palabra estaba con Dios, e la Palabra era Dios). An additional two lamps are brought in while the refrain is repeated. The light spreads and the small candles distributed at the beginning are lit. A few moments of silence follow.*

Ref: The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us. (*Repeat*)

At the end of the refrain, everyone stands up. The Evangeliario (Book of the Gospel) is carried in, accompanied by the lamp of the Pauline Family and incense. A person not standing at the lectern solemnly proclaims the whole Prologue of John.

Reader:

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness has not overcome it.
A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony,
to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.
The true light, which enlightens everyone,
was coming into the world.
He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.
He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.
But to those who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to those who believe in his name,
who were born not by natural generation
nor by human choice
nor by a man's decision but of God.
**And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.**

At the end of this proclamation, the assembly sings:

Ref: The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us. (*Repeat*)

The Evangeliario is opened and placed on the lectern, which is adorned with flowers. At the same time, in crescendo, all the lights are lit and the proclamation of the Prologue continues from the lectern on which the Evangeliario rests.

Reader:

John testified to him and cried out, saying,
"This was he of whom I said,
"The one who is coming after me
ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me."
From his fullness we have all received,
grace in place of grace,
because while the law was given through Moses,
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
The only Son, God,
who is at the Father's side,
has revealed him.

*At the end of the proclamation, the assembly sings **alleluia** several times.*

A brief moment of silence follows.

Celebrant: We are gathered here in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Cel: Dear sisters and brothers, the Word has brought us together to share in the immense love of God the Father, who in the Holy Spirit sent his Son, the Word, to dwell among us and share with us the merciful Face of the Father and the mysteries of his Kingdom.

Guide: We are coming to the end of the Liturgical Year. Today, with Evening Prayer I for the Feast of Christ the King, we prepare to open a new year, which, for the Pauline Family, will be a Biblical Year dedicated in a special way to the study, prayerful reading and proclamation of the Word of God, in response to the mandate of God the Father, the Church and our dear Founder, Blessed James Alberione.

Let us open our hearts to the divine presence revealed in Sacred Scripture so as to rediscover the meaning of life embodied in the Word made flesh: Christ, the King of the universe.

A brief moment of silence follows.

Cel: Let us pray. Father, you raised up in the Church Blessed James Alberione, a priest, to proclaim to the world your Son, Way and Truth and Life, through the many forms of communication. In imitation of his example, help us dedicate all our strength to listening to, incarnating and taking the Gospel to all peoples, especially those on the existential and intellectual peripheries. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, God and Man, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

A: Amen.

Everyone sits.

Guide: Blessed James Alberione always placed the Bible at the center of his spiritual and apostolic life. His preaching was constantly inspired by the Gospel and the Letters of St. Paul, which were the foundation of the spiritual-apostolic formation he gave to the Pauline Family. Let us listen to the words of the Apostle Paul.

From the Second Letter of St. Paul Apostle to the Thessalonians (2:13–3:5)

We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, and that we may be rescued from evil and wicked people, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

A: Thanks be to God.

A brief moment of silence follows.

Poly-psalm (147 and 119)

Ref: Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path. Alleluia.

The Lord has established peace on your borders,
he feeds you with finest wheat.
He sends out his word to the earth,
and swiftly runs his command. **Ref.**

He showers down snow white as wool,
he sends down hailstones like crumbs.
Before such cold, the waters freeze.
He sends his word and they melt,
at the breath of his mouth the waters flow. **Ref.**

He makes his word known to Jacob,
to Israel his laws and decrees.
He has not dealt thus with other nations,
he has not taught them his decrees. **Ref.**

Lord, how I love your law!
It is ever in my mind.
Your command makes me wiser than my foes,
for I keep your precepts. **Ref.**

I have more insight than all who teach me
for I ponder your will.
I have more understanding than the old
for I keep your precepts.
I turn my feet from evil paths
to obey your word. **Ref.**

I have not turned away from your decrees;
you yourself have taught me.
Your promise is sweeter to my taste
than honey in the mouth.
I gain understanding from your precepts;
I hate the ways of falsehood. **Ref.**

Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path.
I make a solemn vow
to keep your just edicts. **Ref.**

A brief moment of silence follows.

Guide: “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’ (*Dei Verbum*, 21). Moreover, before becoming a written text, the Word of God was handed down orally and kept alive by the faith of a people who, in the midst of many others, acknowledged it as their own history and the source of their identity. Biblical faith, then, is based on the Living Word, not on a book” (*Aperuit Illis*, 11).

Let us now listen to the words of the Fathers of the Church, of the Magisterium and some texts from the Pauline Family’s charismatic sources concerning Sacred Scripture.

The texts are proclaimed by two alternating readers, who are not standing at the lectern.

R1: Remember that one alone is God’s discourse, developed throughout the whole of Sacred Scripture, and one alone is the Word that resounds in the mouths of all holy writers. That Word, being God and being with God from the beginning, cannot be spoken because he is beyond time. Nor should we be amazed if, because of our weakness, he lowered himself to speak our words when he lowered himself to take on the weakness of our body.

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

R2: This is how you should understand the Scriptures: as the one and perfect body of the Word.

Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*, 39

Brief musical interlude

R1: I fulfill my duty by obeying the commands of Christ: “search the scriptures” (Jn. 5:39), and “seek and you will find” (Mt. 7:7), so that I will not hear him say to me, as he said to the Jews: “You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God” (Mt. 22:29).

For if, as the Apostle Paul said, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, then those who do not know the Scriptures do not know the power of God nor his wisdom. Ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ.

Jerome, *Prologue of the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*

Brief musical interlude

R2: In the two angels [who appeared in the tomb of Christ] we can recognize the two Testaments. [...] They are united where the body of the Lord is, because, announcing in a convergent manner that the Lord was incarnated, died and rose again, the two Testaments are in a certain way seated at his head (the Old Testament) and at his feet (the New Testament).

Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 2, 25, 3

R1: Never approach the words of the mysteries that are in Scripture without praying and asking the help of God. Say: “Lord, help me feel the power that is in [your Word].” Reflect on the fact that prayer is the key that opens the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Isaac of Nineveh, *Ascetical Discourses*, 73

Brief musical interlude

R2: 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 of both God’s Word and Christ’s body.

Brief musical interlude

R1: So what can you give [people]? God’s Word! How powerful you are when you quote a phrase from the Gospel! The Word of God is the highest authority. One of the Psalms says: “Through your Word, I am wiser and more powerful than your enemies”!
So when you bring [people] the Word of God, and when your words are accompanied and supported by those of the Scriptures, who can resist you?

Fr. Alberione, *PrA*, 188

Brief musical interlude

R2: We are servants of the *Word of reconciliation*, also among Christians, and we yearn with all our heart “that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified” (2 Th. 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 forth” from God and “became flesh”* (Jn. 1:14). It is vital that the Church today goes forth to proclaim the Gospel to everyone, in all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear (cf. EG 23). We do this in obedience to the missionary mandate of the Lord, certain of his presence among us until the end of the world (cf. Mt. 28:20).

Pope Francis, *Address to the Delegation of the Church Relations Committee of the United Bible Societies*

Brief musical interlude

Guide: It was the ardent desire of Blessed James Alberione that we give a pre-eminent position to the Bible in all areas of our prayer, life and work.

The printing of Gospels and Bibles, the institution of Gospel Feasts and Bible Weeks, the dissemination of the Word of God to families by the Daughters of St. Paul whom he liked to call the “postmistresses of God,” the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament based on the reading of the Bible— all this reminds us that the source of Pauline spiritual thought and apostolic action has always been the Word of God. Let us now venerate the Scriptures as an expression of our earnest desire to make the Word of God the center of our thoughts and of our whole life.

The celebrant takes the Evangeliario from the lectern, goes to the center of the sanctuary and stands in front of the altar, facing the assembly. He holds the Book open while everyone lines up to perform this act of veneration. An appropriate song or songs can be sung to accompany this gesture. At the end, the Evangeliario is placed on the altar.

The following songs, composed for the Year of the Bible, can be used:

**Song: *La Parola del Signore corra* by Sr. M. Cecilia Stiz, pdm
NOT TRANSLATED**

**Song: *Perché la Parola corra* by Fr. Boguslaw Zeman, ssp
NOT TRANSLATED**

**Song: *Para que a Palavra corra* by L. and M. Ir. Verônica Firmino, fsp
NOT TRANSLATED**

A brief moment of silence follows.

SECOND MOMENT

The Word Becomes Face

An icon of the Face of Jesus Master is carried in, accompanied by two lamps, while a song is sung.

Ref. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us. (*Repeat*)

The icon is displayed on a special stand.

Soloist: God the Bridegroom became flesh in the womb of Mary, so that his covenant with his people might be realized and bring about justice on earth.

All: *I adore you present in me, Incarnate Word, only-begotten Son and splendor of the Father, born of Mary.*

S: God the Bridegroom became a human being so as to walk among us and lead everyone—men and women, the elderly and children, of every culture and country—along the path of true humanity, so that we might work together to safeguard our common home, the entire planet.

A: *I thank you, sole Master and Truth, for coming to dwell within me, ignorant and sinful as I am.*

S: God the Bridegroom became flesh to reunite our broken and divided peoples, to heal and console all those who are wounded and violated by wars and every other atrocity.

A: *With Mary, I offer you to the Father; through you, with you, in you, may there be eternal praise, thanksgiving and supplication for the peace of all humanity. Enlighten my mind; make me a docile disciple of the Church; help me to live by faith; give me knowledge of the Scriptures; make me your ardent apostle; enable the light of your Gospel to reach the farthest ends of the earth.*

S: Your name, O God, is *Myron*, which is poured out; you are a God with many names and faces, including ours. You are the Suffering Servant, the Bridegroom who consummates his marriage on the nuptial bed of the cross. You are the King of justice and of peace. With your death, you broke down the walls of division and hatred. May our separated churches and all peoples find in your Gospel the sole way to peace, fraternity and fruitful collaboration, recognizing your Face in the face of every person who dwells on this earth. Amen.

The celebrant offers the assembly a brief reflection. A time of silence follows.

THIRD MOMENT

The Word Speeds Forward and Sends Us Forth

The celebrant invites the assembly to stand up, saying:

C: Obedient to the Word of the Savior and formed by his divine teaching, we have the courage to say:

A: Our Father...

C: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us unity and peace according to your will. You who live and reign forever and ever.

A: Amen.

C: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

A: And also with you.

C: Let us offer each other a sign of peace.

Guide: Dear brothers and sisters, all of us who have been baptized have the duty to get to know God through his Word and to proclaim and witness to him to everyone, above all those who have not yet met him. Today let us ask him to bless us all as we prepare to live the upcoming Year of the Bible in a family spirit, in study, in meditation and in a prayerful reading and proclamation of the Sacred Scriptures. Before asking for his divine blessing, let us recite together the *Prayer for the Year of the Bible*:

O Jesus, true Light
that enlightens every human being,
we know you came from the Father
to be our Master
and teach us your way in truth:
the words you gave us are Life and Spirit.
Help us come to know the mysteries of God
and his unfathomable riches.
Show us all the treasures of God's wisdom
hidden in you.
May the Word remain in us,
guiding our steps like a light.
May it speed forward
and spread to the ends of the earth.
May Mary, Queen of the Apostles,
and Saints Peter and Paul
be our example, inspiration
and guide. Amen.

Prayer freely inspired by J. Alberione's book: *Read the Holy Scriptures*, p. 320.

A brief moment of silence follows. Afterward, the celebrant pronounces this solemn blessing:

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

After conquering death
and before ascending to you, Father,
he sent his Apostles
to proclaim to all people the Gospel of life.

Lord, look upon these your servants,
who, clothed with the sign of the cross,
are being sent forth as messengers of salvation and peace.

Guide their steps with your right hand
and sustain them with the power of your grace,
so that they will not be crushed beneath
the burden of their apostolic labors.

May the voice of Christ resound in their words
and may those who hear them
be moved to obey the Gospel.

Father, fill their hearts with your Holy Spirit
so that, having become all to all,
they may lead to you
a multitude of sons and daughters
who will praise you forever
in your holy Church.
Through Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

Taking the Evangeliario from the altar, the celebrant blesses the assembly.

C: The Lord be with you.

A: And with your Spirit.

C: May the all-powerful God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you.

A: Amen.

C: Allow yourselves to be led by the Word and go in peace.

A: Amen.

The Evangeliario is returned to the altar and a song for the Year of the Bible concludes the service as the assembly disbands.

Song: Parola del Padre per noi (Biblical Year Hymn by Fr. P. Lanzoni)
NOT TRANSLATED