

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING  
THE NEW EVANGELIZATION



# SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

LITURGICAL - PASTORAL RESOURCE **2021**

*“Holding fast  
to the Word of life”*  
(cf. Phil 2:16)





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For Pope's text

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00120 Città del Vaticano

[www.libreriaeditricevaticana.va](http://www.libreriaeditricevaticana.va)

© PERIODICI SAN PAOLO s.r.l., 2021

Via Giotto, 36 - 20145 Milano

© EDIZIONI SAN PAOLO s.r.l., 2021

Piazza Soncino, 5 - 20092 Cinisello Balsamo (Milano)  
[www.edizionisanpaolo.it](http://www.edizionisanpaolo.it)

Distribuzione: Diffusione San Paolo s.r.l.

Piazza Soncino, 5 - 20092 Cinisello Balsamo (Milano)



## Holding fast to the Word of life

(Phil 2:16)

This year the biblical phrase for celebrating the *Sunday of the Word of God* is taken from the Letter to the Philippians: "Holding fast to the Word of life" (Phil 2:16). As can be understood from some references, the Apostle is writing the letter from prison. It is certainly one of the Church's most important texts. The Christological passage in which Paul highlights the *kenosis* fulfilled by the Son of God in becoming man remains throughout our history as a point of reference of no return for understanding the mystery of the Incarnation. The liturgy has never ceased praying with this text. Theology has made it one of the main elements for understanding the faith. In these words the Christian witness finds the foundation for building love-filled service. While the letter expresses the essential substance of the apostle's preaching, it also shows how important it is for the Christian community to increase its knowledge of the Gospel.

With our verse, the apostle offers an important lesson to the Christian community to show them the way they are called to live in the world. First of all, it recalls the importance that Christians must give to their commitment to sal-

vation, precisely by virtue of the event achieved by the Son of God in becoming man and offering himself to the violence of death on the cross: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). No Christian can think of living in the world apart from this event of love that has transformed his life and all of history. Of course, Paul does not forget that no matter how hard Christians may work at attaining salvation, it is always the primacy of God's action that remains: "for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). The combination of these two elements provides insight into the challenging words that the apostle now gives to the Christians of Philippi, having before his eyes the believers who over the centuries will be disciples of the Lord.

The first commitment that believers are required to make is consistency of life. The call to be "blameless" and "upright" in the midst of a world where deception and cunningness often predominate refers to the words of Jesus when he invited his disciples: "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents

and innocent as doves" (Mt 10:16). For this to happen, Paul shows the way: Christians need to remain faithful and united to the Word of God. "Holding fast to the Word of life" Christ's disciples "shine like stars in the world". It is a beautiful image that the apostle offers to all of us today, as well. We are living in a dramatic time. Humanity thought it had reached the most solid certainties of science and an economy of solutions to ensure security of life. Today it is forced to admit that neither of these guarantees a future. Disorientation and mistrust emerge strongly due to unexpected uncertainty. Also in this situation, Christ's disciples have the responsibility of offering a word of hope. They can achieve this insofar as they remain firmly anchored to the Word of God, which generates life and presents itself as full of meaning for personal existence.

Perhaps the most authoritative interpretation of this verse is that of Victorinus. The great Roman rhetorician, whose conversion was described by Augustine in the *Confessions*, who wrote in his *Commentary to the Philippians*: "I glory in you because you possess the Word of life, that is, because you know

Christ, who is the Word of life, because what is done in Christ is life. Therefore Christ is the Word of life, from this we perceive how great are the profit and the glory of those who govern the souls of others". On the *Sunday of the Word of God*, rediscovering the responsibility to work so that this Word may grow in the hearts of believers and animate them with joy for evangelization is a wish that becomes prayer.

\* Rino Fisichella

A close-up photograph of a person's hands resting on an open book. The book is open to two facing pages, which are slightly blurred. The person is wearing a light-colored, ribbed shirt. The background is bright and out of focus.

## The Word of God in Community

- Sacred Scripture teaches to always trust in God despite the problems and difficulties that may be encountered (cf. *Is 26:1-6*).
- It is fitting for the Christian community to come together to worship and proclaim the Word of God, as well as to meditate and pray with the same Word.

# Some practical thoughts about Covid-19



Considering the situation of the present pandemic, it is recommended that the organizers of the *Sunday of the Word of God* adapt the community initiative to comply with current health regulations.

To experience the *Sunday of the Word of God* successfully in community, it is important to prepare it well in advance. It would be good if the preparations go from the spiritual level (personal and community prayer for the success and openness of the heart to the Word of God) to the material (appropriate planning, corresponding to one's own community).

## CREATE AN ORGANIZING GROUP

The first step is to establish a group of people who can organize, coordinate and carry out the pastoral initiatives for this *Sunday*. The task of this group will be to:

- Pray for a good outcome;
- plan the various initiatives (present proposals for different age groups, create times of a cultural, historical and biblical nature);

- choose suitable people for the practical execution of the program;
- estimate any expenses;
- prepare the necessary materials;
- publicize information about this *Sunday*;
- reach out to people in difficulty (the sick, nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, charities...);
- involve, as much as possible, people of other religions and Christian denominations, as well as non-believers.

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

First of all, it is helpful to remember that the Bible is not just a text of high cultural, moral, historical, social or artistic value, capable of inspiring the thinking of people today. The Bible contains within itself the Word of God, which is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (*Heb 4:12*).

To encounter the living Word it is necessary to focus above all on spiritual preparation, asking for an open heart

for us and for those to whom it will be proclaimed during the *Sunday of the Word of God*. Consequently, the preparations for planning the initiative necessarily require that we start with individual and community prayer.

At least one week before the event, the communities should include in the prayers of the faithful an intention dedicated to the success of the event.

The members of the organizing group, as well as catechists, evangelisers and other persons responsible for proclaiming the Gospel could organize silent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, offered for the celebration of the *Sunday of the Word of God*.

## PLAN THE EVENT

The proposal for carrying out the initiative should be directed to both communities and individuals, always keeping in mind that the Bible is the living Word of God and that its unquestionable cultural value has many connotations.

## INVOLVING THE FAITHFUL

Information about the event should be made known well in advance so as to reach as many people as possible.

Undoubtedly, a personal invitation is the most direct way to let people know about the initiative.

Flyers and brochures can also be used, which are easily distributed to people and posted on bulletin boards.

*Social media* such as *facebook*, *twitter* and other programs or *apps* can also be used to reach as many people as possible.

## LIVE THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

It is important to foster personal and community encounter with the living Word.

We are called to become instruments in the hands of the Lord and remember that, "for as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered 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 out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (*Is 55:10-11*).

#### CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE THE WORD OF GOD

The *Sunday* ends, but the Word of God does not stop working in our hearts. It would be good to create possibilities for formation (for example: weekly or monthly *Lectio divina*, bible

groups, etc.) where the encounter with the Word of God can be continued, offering the possibility of ongoing formation for the faithful.

Below are some pastoral proposals, which can help highlight the importance of the *Sunday of the Word of God* in community. Depending on the situation of each community, other things can be developed such as: Institution of readers by the Bishop, continuous *Lectio* of a text, consignment of the Word in different environments, in-depth cultural experiences, plays about biblical characters, training sessions, ecumenical celebrations.



# Rite of Enthronement of the Word of God during Mass



It would be good for the ritual of enthronement to take place at least once 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 (a chapel), an area should be prepared that is raised, decorated and visible to the entire assembly where the sacred text can be placed.

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.

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

"The time has come" - the Lord says in the Gospel. Do not wait another moment; do not put off to tomorrow the possibility of encountering God in His Word! "Repent and believe in the Gospel" means change your lifestyle and welcome the good news, the Word sent to us by God the Father. Only in this way can you know the love of God, who

in His incarnate Son has revealed to us the true face of the merciful Father.

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 in our time.

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

The penitential act follows, which could be the following:

C. The Lord Jesus, who invites us to the table of the Word and of the Eucharist, calls us to conversion. We recognize that we are sinners and confidently invoke God's mercy.

C. Lord, you are the way that leads back to the Father, have mercy on us.

R. Lord, have mercy.

C. Christ, who upholds all things with the power of your Word, have mercy on us.

R. Christ, have mercy.

C. Lord, who lets those who listen to your Word pass from death to life, have mercy on us.

R. Lord, have mercy.

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.

## ENTHRONEMENT

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. 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 and opened and incensed.

The homily and the Mass follow as usual.

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

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

C. Brothers and sisters, we have heard the voice of the Lord, who calls us by name and asks us to open our hearts to the Gospel. We present our inten-

tions to God the Father, to welcome His Word in us.

L. Let us pray together and say: Open, our hearts, O Father!

1. So that the Church never tires of proclaiming the Gospel and of bringing the Good News especially to the peripheries of human existence, we pray.

2. For the Holy Spirit to accompany Bishops, Priests and Deacons in their vocation, transforming their life into a gift pleasing to God, we pray.

3. So that the Readers, Catechists and those who spread the Word of God in various communities experience being called by you to proclaim your Kingdom among the peoples, we pray.

4. So that each of us may accept your invitation to conversion and, following our own vocation, live the Gospel with joy, we pray.

C. Let us open our hearts to you, Father, so that you can come and dwell among us, you who live and reign for ever and ever.

R. Amen.



At the end of the celebration the following blessing can be given:

C. May God Almighty remove all evil from you and grant you the gifts of his blessing.

R. Amen.

C. Make your hearts attentive to his Word, so that you may walk in the way of his teaching.

R. Amen.

C. May He help you to understand what is good and right, so that you become joint heirs of the eternal city.

R. Amen.

C. And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and Son + and Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

R. Amen.

# Evening Prayer for the Sunday of the Word of God



The *Sunday of the Word of God*, to be celebrated in the context of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*, offers an opportunity to join in prayer with all those who share Sacred Scripture as a common heritage. The Psalms of the Bible offer everyone words to turn to God in a dialogue of love to present one's life to him and let him transform it. Pope Benedict XVI stated that: "In the Psalms we find expressed every possible human feeling set masterfully in the sight of God; joy and pain, distress and hope, fear and trepidation: here all find expression" (*Verbum Domini*, 24).

This prayer is an invitation to hold "high the word of life" through the Psalms, so that every human activity may be inspired by the "praise offered to God" (*Verbum Domini*, 62).

## INITIAL INVOCATION

V. O God, come to my assistance.  
R. Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

## HYMN

O Christ, you are the light and day which drives away the night, the ever shining Sun of God and pledge of future light.

As now the ev'ning shadows fall please grant us, Lord, we pray, a quiet night to rest in you until the break of day.

Remember us, poor mortal men, we humbly ask, O Lord, and may your presence in our souls, be now our great reward.

## 1 Antiphon

Your word is a lamp for my steps and a light for my way, alleluia.

## PSALM 119 (118)

### Promise to keep God's commandments

*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you* (*Jn 15:12*).

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your ordinances.

I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.

The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.

Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

## 1 Antiphon

Your word is a lamp for my steps and a light for my way, alleluia.

## 2 Antiphon

Blessed are those who hunger; those who thirst for justice will be satisfied.

## PSALM 112 (111)

### Beatitude of the just man

*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true* (*Eph 5:8-9*).

Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments.

Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.

They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.



It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever.

They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord. Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honour.

The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

### 2 Antiphon

Blessed are those who are hungry; those who thirst for justice will be satisfied.

### 3 Antiphon

Heaven and earth bend at the name of Christ the Lord, alleluia.

#### CANTICLE *Phil 2:6-11*

#### Christ the servant of God

Who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### 3 Antiphon

Heaven and earth bend at the name of Christ the Lord, alleluia.

#### SHORT READING *James 1:16-25*

Do not be deceived, my beloved. Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted

word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

#### SHORT RESPONSORY

R. He generated us with a word of truth.  
He generated us with a word of truth.

V. Our souls can be saved  
with a word of truth

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
He generated us with a word of truth.

**Magnificat antiphon**  
Follow me, says the Lord: I will make you fishers of men.



### CANTICLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN (Lk 1:46-55)

#### The soul rejoices in the Lord

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour  
for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
The Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

#### Magnificat antiphon

Follow me, says the Lord: I will make you fishers of men.

#### INTERCESSIONS

V. God created and redeemed the world and always renews it with the action of his Spirit. United in fraternal exultation we invoke his paternal mercy:

R. Renew, O God, the wonders of your love.

Through the Holy Spirit and with the consent of the Virgin Mary you made your eternal Word dwell among us,  
– prepare us to welcome Christ as the Virgin Mary welcomed him.

In the name of your Son, the conqueror of death and the prince of peace,  
– free us from doubt and anguish, so

we can always serve you in joy and love.

Help all those who love justice,  
– to cooperate genuinely to build the world in peace.

Help the oppressed, console the poor; free prisoners, feed the hungry, strengthen the weak,  
– make the victory of the cross shine in everyone.

You, who glorified your Son after the humiliation of death and burial,  
– grant that the deceased join with him in the splendour of eternal life.

Some free intentions can also be added.

#### OUR FATHER

Let us conclude our prayer by recognizing that we are children of the same Father, let's say together ...

Our Father, Who art in heaven  
Hallowed be Thy Name;  
Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
do not let us fall into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

#### PRAYER

O Almighty and Eternal God, guide our actions according to your will, that in the name of your beloved Son, we bear generous fruits of good works. For Christ our Lord. Amen

V. May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.



#### PREPARING TO LISTEN (STATIO)

Preparing to listen is making the *transition from hearing to listening*. It is easy to hear the words of Scripture; it is not as easy to listen to the Word that vibrates in its pages. Words can break through and tear through silence; the Word, on the other hand, asks for “*permission*”. It is discreet, like someone who loves us, and only it - paradoxically! - has the key to open the door to our

heart from the inside: the *key of the Holy Spirit*- the Same that inspired it and continues to inspire it in believers.

Let us invoke him, therefore, so that the Word we are going to hear may be an encounter with the Risen Lord.

*Come Holy Spirit. You are the One who consecrated Jesus with the anointing, sending him to bring the good news to the poor; You are the One who, through 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 proclaim and bear witness ...*

*Fill us with your presence and your strength, your courage and your grace. Make us understand that God continues to call, today, to the service of evangelization. Help us to participate in this ser-*

*vice by living it in communion and solidarity. Amen.*

#### PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD: PHIL 2:12-18

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you—and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.





## PRAYERFUL READING (LECTIO)

*Let's reread* the text personally, even the previous passage - *Phil 2: 1-11* - because it is the background that precedes it and underline it, perhaps with a pencil. *Let's underline* the verbs of action, subjects, nouns, adjectives. We won't race through the text eagerly, but let it flow slowly and persist in our mind and heart, like waves caressing a shoreline.

Very slowly, the meanings emerge (Paul's feelings and desires, God's action, the lifestyle of the community, the profile and heart of Christ Jesus), even without sophisticated tools of exegesis. We will see, in fact, that "it is not the abundance of knowledge that fills and satisfies the Soul, rather it is the inward tasting and savouring of things" (Ignatius of Loyola).

This quiet reading is not useless effort, wasted time: it is the Spirit that turns the lock of our door to let in the great King, the Bridegroom and soul of our community.

Having finished reading the text, let us now read the parallel texts since the first key that opens Scripture is Scripture itself (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 112). The gaze widens and deepens; the heart and the mystery of

Christ are becoming ever more obvious, close, bright.

## MEDITATION (MEDITATIO)

The reading that speaks to the heart (*cor ad cor loquitur*) opens to meditation, reflection and questions. In a word: it opens to dialogue with the Lord, animated and looked after by the *Holy Spirit, as in the hands of a mother*, as under the wings of a hen.

What does the text say to me? What is the Lord saying to me? Do I recognize him present and active in my life history? In our history? In the history of humanity? What are you suggesting to my community? What inner attitudes do you want? Which ones need correcting? Which ones need even more maturing? What thoughts and desires do you want to live in my heart? What ways of speaking and acting could be looked at? Which brothers and sisters have I/we hurt? Dominated? Rejected?

To foster and facilitate this dialogue with the Word, and to reinvigorate the missionary spirit of our community, an exegetical-spiritual explanation of the text is offered.

## "THE WORD IS KNEADED WITH HISTORY AND TRANSFORMED WITH A COMMUNITY"

### *Our cry*

We are faced with a Word that is kneaded with history and a history that is transformed and transfigured by the Word. This happens through a small community, capable of loving. Yes, because "men make history, but God makes History" (Father Oreste Benzi). We needed it. Now. Faced with a history that in a flash has been overturned in our hands, by an enemy that is so small - Covid-19 - that we cannot even see it with the naked eye. Lost, helpless, angry. And where is God? Yes, let's ask Him too: "God, where are you?" It is the cry of many, many... Everyone!

### *The background of the passage: joy and history*

The passage just read and reread begins with "Therefore", so it is the conclusion of a discourse that began much earlier, even at the beginning of the letter. Its theme began at the beginning of chapter 2 (mentioned above, as the background of the passage): the joy of

Paul and his community. "Make my joy complete" (2: 2) and concludes: "[...] I am glad and rejoice with all of you [...] and you also must be glad and rejoice with me" (2:17-18) (the Greek text always uses the same term – *chara/chairo* to say joy/rejoice).

At the beginning, the Apostle beckons his small community to obey God "not only in my presence". What happened, then, in those few days, between 50 and 51 A.D., when Paul first arrived in Philippi and established the first Church in Europe?

### *Paul to the Philippians: God upsets and overturns all projects*

Those few but very intense days, are narrated in detail in *Acts 16: 6-40*. They could be defined as an uninterrupted succession of *setbacks and surprises*. Paul, accompanied by Silas and the young Timothy, cannot do what he wants to: He who "arouses will and action" takes him where he does not want to go and, above all, as he never would have thought of, much less, chosen to do.

Twice, in fact, the Spirit blocks "his" way; then, the Spirit makes him hear the cry of those who urgently need the



proclamation of the Gospel: “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” pleads a Macedonian in a vision (vv. 6-10).

Arriving in Philippi, the first Macedonian city on the European border (cf. v. 12), a Roman colony, he tries to meet the few Jews gathered in prayer on the Sabbath day. But who does he find along the Gangites River? *Not pious Jews intent on reading the Torah, but women*, who perhaps were washing clothes. One of them, Lydia, to whom “the Lord opened her heart”, “urged” us to come and stay at her home (vv. 14-15): a wealthy (and rather insistent!) woman, together with her family, thus become the first European Christians, baptized by Paul.

As if the misunderstandings weren’t enough, another woman, a young slave girl, a fortune-teller, really irritates him (*very much annoyed*, v. 18); but the blurt cost him dearly: pushed by those who took advantage of her, “*the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison*” (vv.22-23).

Let us ask ourselves: what would Paul and his people have ever thought, if not: “Mission failed!”?

But exactly “*in the innermost cell*” (v.24) *the lowest point to which the dignity of a Roman citizen could fall, the “history of man” ends and the “History of God” begins to manifest itself*: that jailer who should have been a good guard, helps them get out (!), washes their wounds and does not try to save his hide, but asks to save his life and that of his entire family (cf. vv. 30-34); those judges, who were to condemn them, suddenly ordered their release, “*they were frightened and came to apologize to them*” (vv. 35, 38-39).

Well, with two women, a rich persistent one and a slave girl, and through the vile thirst for profit of those who took advantage of it, the Holy Spirit changes the history of Europe: *the word of God made the Roman walls collapse under their feet - unbelievers - of the apostles!*

Here is the first nucleus of the Philippian community: the family of a jailer and a merchant of purple cloth. They are the ones who “*obeyed*” the History of God, together with Paul, who in prison, “*about midnight were praying and singing hymns to God*” (v. 25), but who had also seen all his plans overturned, his freedom restricted and lapse in-

to narrow and bitter prospects. These are the same sentiments that are harboured in our hearts today in the face of the pandemic.

#### ***The Philippians: the evangelising Bride***

A few years later, this Jew from Tarsus, from another prison, sent this small community, surely now grown in all respects, a letter, known as the “*letter of joy and friendship*”. In it, the rough and fiery Apostle of the Gentiles no longer comes through, but rather, the father; indeed, almost the figure of the bridegroom: “*because I hold you in my heart, [...]. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus*” (1: 7-8); *my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown*” (4: 1).

He thanks God and prays “*with joy always*” for them, because he feels them “*sharing in the Gospel*” and “*sharing in God’s grace*” that has been granted to him (1: 5; 7), as - we can say - of a bride, who he feels beside him, *intimate and faithful, in the mission entrusted to him*.

He wishes to share with her “*the events that have pushed the Gospel forward*”, which is all his joy (1: 18); he recognizes that he will be saved “*through*

*your prayers*” (1:19); and then the cry of his heart, the marrow of his life, the soul of his soul: “*for to me living is Christ*”! (1: 21).

For this reason, he exhorts them to “*stand firm in one spirit*”, to have “*one mind for the faith of the gospel*”, and to be “*in no way intimidated*”, “*having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have*” (1: 27-30).

#### ***Hymn to the beauty of the Bride***

At this point in the letter, Paul’s heart melts, opens up and pours out in a solemn hymn, loving and eager for the beauty of “his” Church-bride, which can shower him and fill him with joy: “*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, we translate with the exegetes - any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind*” (2:1-2).

These are traits of spiritual beauty that Paul ardently desires, but which can be imprinted on the face of this Bride, only if her members know how to renounce the greed of “*their own self*” (superiority, self-esteem, interests), strip themselves (of their desires



and wills), disarm themselves in front of others (of judgments, gossip) and live at the lowest level - such as that physically inhabited by Paul, still in prison because of the Gospel (cf. 1: 3-4).

In a word, "*let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*"(2: 5), who did not cling to his divine rights, but emptied and humbled himself, becoming obedient to the extreme. An obedience, which was, however, the royal door for entering into his "exaltation" as the Lord of history (cf. 2: 6-11).

#### *The beauty of the evangelising Bride*

Paul then "urges" the small community to enter into the "mind" and into "obeying" Christ, not only as individuals, but also as a community (cf. 2: 5, 12). A "mind", an "obeying" and an "exalted being" of Christ, which is not only a past event, but is still lived by the Risen One, before the Father, in his ecclesial Body (and relived and given back in every Eucharist).

By so doing, the first community of Philippi - as this text will say - can be a *fruitful bride*: not only a recipient, but above all "*in communion for evangelization*" and "*sharer in the grace*" granted to the Apostle to proclaim the Gospel.

In other words, being a *collaborator in proclaiming* (spiritually and materially, cf. 4: 15-18), ensuring that the Word is "alive", effective, a bearer of Life in "human history", that is, introducing them into the "Salvific history of God"; so that they are *trans-figured*, as happened to Paul, Lydia, the jailer and their families. But let's go step by step.

Paul strongly urges his loved ones to enter into the "obedience" and "mind" of Christ, that is, to "*get busy with their salvation, with fear and trembling*", since it "pushes" to evangelise. Enter with a filial, trusting, but also solicitous fear (cf. 1 Cor 2: 3; Eph 6: 5), as the stakes are really high! In fact, to the extent that the small community understands its call and responsibility from God, "*it is God who awakens in them the will and the action, according to his benevolent plans*": he calls them and does it as entering into his universal salvific History, in an interpenetration between human action - the *interior* will and the exterior *action* - and the Trinitarian one. In other words, Paul asks this Church-bride to love to the very end: *docilitas amoris* (docility in love). And he rattles off their needs, which pierce the soul to the living flesh:

- «*Do everything – I mean everything! – without murmuring*»: not as the Israelites "murmured" in the desert, against Moses, longing for their bellies to be full (cf. Ex 15: 24; 16: 2; 17: 3) and thus opposing the "benevolent plan" of their liberation and the Work that God was doing for their good and that of all humanity.
- «*Do everything – I mean everything! – without questioning*», that is, without arguing, discussing in vain, insinuating, distrusting, contradicting, doubting, criticizing - all wickedness that comes from the heart of man (cf. Mt 15:19).

So, Paul asks the Bride of Christ to "die within" (it is in the heart that lack of submission to God is dissipated!), not to get lost in "so many stories of men", to let that personal and intra-community sin die that prevents God from fulfilling "His Salvific History". He asks her "to die within", like her Spouse (2: 7-8), in order to be pure, bright, beautiful "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5: 27; 1: 4), shining like a star in the night of the world (cf. Eph 5: 8-4; Mt 5: 14), that is, among those who oppose the history of God, a "*perverse and crooked generation*" (Cfr. Dt 32: 5).

*It is with this "theophanic" beauty that the Church-bride evangelises: as a lamp set in a high place, she spreads the "word that gives Life" and thus becomes a fruitful Bride.*

Here is Paul's pride and joy! The joy of the Apostle's fruitfulness, tireless father and husband (2: 16); a joy for which - he had just written - "dying" could no longer be "a gain" (1:21-26). Being able to offer to God a faith lived in this way by his community has no price, if not that of his blood, which Paul, already in chains, would gladly pour on this offering, like his Lord, the true and only Spouse, to whom he promised it (cf. Eph 5: 25-27; 2 Cor 11: 2).

#### *The troublesome question and the answer of "brotherhood"*

Let us now return to the initial question: "God, where are you?" The Word announced to us that Christ is Lord of History and the "*History of God*" is not finished, because "*God wants everyone to be saved*" (cf. 1 Tim 2: 4): it *continues to be fulfilled in the "histories of men"*, which are fighting many battles today, including the insidious attack of the pandemic.



Even the Apostle's cry to his community has not subsided, but continues to echo, to tell - even for us, individuals and small communities - the need to be *docile collaborators in proclaiming, lights of the Word that give Life*. A voice that cries out today: "All Brothers"!

Yes, "everyone", writes Pope Francis: *everyone* should seek the good of the other; *everyone* should think according to "we"; *everyone* should have a sense of solidarity (as echoed in *Phil 2: 2-4* and in many other passages of the letter), building a "culture of encounter" and not of confrontation, of "care" and not of waste, of "gratuitousness" and not of domination.

Therefore, Paul concludes to his loved ones: «*Rejoice in the Lord, always.*

*Again I will say, Rejoice. The Lord is at hand! » (Phil 4: 4-5).*

### PRAYER (ORATIO E CONTEMPLATIO)

Enlightened by the splendour of the Word, one can now savour the *peace of heart*, which feels like it *abides in God's truth*. Then, *gratitude* opens up to *praise*; but one can also kneel in *repentance* and in the sincere and deep desire for *forgiveness* from God and neighbour.

Prayer can also be an *invocation*, a request to the Father for the help necessary to live the Word that has been heard or, of *entrusting* a person, a group, a commitment, a work.

Once expressed, the prayer of conversation stops, is silent and opens to *contemplation*, that is, it becomes a *simple gaze* with the Lord Jesus and with the Father, like children, lovers, mothers. It is a very delicate moment, in which God's action prevails over the human effort to understand and speak. More than a "looking at God", it is being "looked at" by Him; it is to relish His gaze on our life and on our community.

At this point, the heart "warms up", as it experiences evangelical *joy*, the *taste of truth*, of the goodness of God and of "being of the Lord" (Christians, in fact!). One is ready to *welcome the motions, the touches and the lights of*

*the Holy Spirit*, who moves us to live the high standard of Christian life. It is this wholly interior joy, calm and effusive, that drove the great *saints* to perform extraordinary works or ordinary works in an extraordinary way.

We now come to the last step, that of discerning "what to do" for the Lord, *with the Lord and in the Lord*.

### DISCERNMENT AND ACTION (DELIBERATIO E ACTIO)

On the impulse and in response to the Word listened to, made "alive" by the Spirit, the desire, if not the urgency, of a specific action or set of actions, arises in the soul. One senses a *certain clarity and certainty where the Spirit wants to lead*: for example, meeting with a person; the correction of certain attitudes, of a way of doing or speaking; the initiative of a good work or renouncing another, etc.

The tension between prayer and action disappears. *Contemplative action* arises, exerted in the light and with the power of the Spirit of Christ.





## The Word of God in the Family

- «Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table» (*Ps 128: 3*).
- Looking at a family around the table is an opportunity to discover the love story that is intertwined among them. A history which, animated by the Word of God, must grow and become stronger.
- This Word can also be "a source of comfort and companionship for every family that experiences difficulties or suffering. For it shows them the goal of their journey" (*Cfr. Amoris Laetitia, 22*).
- Therefore, it is fitting that the Word of God be welcomed into every family so that each of its members may know, understand and feel encouraged by it.

# Rite of receiving the Word of God in the Family



Following the Synod on the Word of God, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* was published, where we can 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 med-

itation on passages of Scripture can be cultivated.

*Verbum Domini*, 85

During the Sunday of the Word of God, the entire family gathers around the main table of their home, where the crucifix, an icon of the Blessed Mother, a candle and the Bible are placed.

One of the family members lights the candle and says:

The light of Christ

All respond:

Thanks be to God

Then another person (the text can also be divided among several people) recites the following prayer:

Come within me Holy Spirit, in my heart and in my mind.

Pour forth your brilliance upon my intellect, so that I can know the Father in meditating on the word of the Gospel.

Grant me your love, so that even today, urged by your word, I can find you in the situations and people I meet.

Grant me your wisdom, so that in the light of your word, I may

know how to live and judge what I have experienced today.

Grant me perseverance, so I can patiently penetrate the message of God in the Gospel.

*Saint Thomas Aquinas*

All respond:

Amen.

A family member takes the Bible, opens it, and begins reading the following passage: *Matthew 13: 1-9. "The Parable of the Sower"*

## LISTEN TO THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW:

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other

seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

All family members kiss the book of Sacred Scripture.

A moment of silence follows, of meditation on the text just heard and of personal prayer.

After that a person reads the following comment:

Jesus tells a great crowd the Parable—that we all know well—of the Sower, who casts seeds over four different types of terrain. The Word of God, symbolized by the seeds, is not an abstract Word, but rather Christ himself, the Word of the Father who became flesh in Mary's womb. Embracing the



Word of God therefore, means embracing the personage of Christ; of Christ himself.

There are several different ways to receive the Word of God. We may do so like a path, where birds immediately come and eat the seeds. This would be distraction, a great danger of our time. Beset by lots of small talk, by many ideologies, by continuous opportunities for distraction inside and outside the home, we can lose our zest for silence, for reflection, for dialogue with the Lord, to the point that we risk losing our faith, not receiving the Word of God, as we are seeing everything, distracted by everything, by worldly things.

Another possibility: we may receive the Word of God like rocky ground, with little soil. There the seeds spring up quickly, but they also soon wither away, because they are unable to sink roots to any depth. This is the image of those who receive the Word of God with momentary enthusiasm, which however, remains superficial; it does not assimilate the Word of God. In this way, at the

first difficulty, such as a discomfort or disturbance in life, that still-feeble faith dissolves, as the seed that falls among the rocks withers.

We can also — a third possibility that Jesus mentions in the parable — receive the Word of God like ground where thorny bushes grow. And the thorns are the deceit of wealth, of success, of worldly concerns... There, the Word grows a little, but becomes choked, it is not strong, and it dies or does not bear fruit.

Lastly — the fourth possibility — we may receive it like good soil. Here, and here alone does the seed take root and bear fruit. The seed fallen upon this fertile soil represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, safeguard it in their heart and put it into practice in everyday life.

This Parable of the Sower is somewhat the ‘mother’ of all parables, because it speaks about listening to the Word. It reminds us that the Word of God is a seed which in itself is fruitful and effective; and God scatters it every-

where, paying no mind to waste. Such is the heart of God! Each one of us is ground on which the seed of the Word falls; no one is excluded! The Word is given to each one of us. We can ask ourselves: what type of terrain am I? Do I resemble the path, the rocky ground, the bramble bush? If we want, with the grace of God, we can become good soil, ploughed and carefully cultivated, to help ripen the seed of the Word. It is already present in our heart, but making it fruitful depends on us; it depends on the embrace that we reserve for this seed.

Often one is distracted by too many interests, by too many enticements, and it is difficult to distinguish, among the many voices and many words, that of the Lord, the only one that makes us free. This is why it is important to accustom oneself to listening to the Word of God, to reading it. And I return once more to that advice: always keep a handy copy of the Gospel with you, a pocket edition of the Gospel, in your pocket, in your purse ... and then, read

a short passage every day, so that you become used to reading the Word of God, understanding well the seed that God offers you, and thinking with what soil do I receive it.

May the Virgin Mary, perfect model of good and fertile soil, help us, with her prayer, to become willing soil without thorns or rocks, so that we may bear good fruit for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis, *Angelus*,  
12 July 2020

**After the comment, everyone recites the Lord's prayer together:**

Our Father...

**At the end of the prayer, the person who lit the candle takes the Bible and makes the sign of the cross, blessing the whole family with the Holy Scripture.**

**The candle is extinguished, saying:**

Stay with us, Lord, now and forever and ever. Amen.

# Formation proposals on the Word of God for young people



St. Jerome assures us that the Bible is the instrument “in which God every day speaks to those who believe” (*Lett. CXXXIII*, 13). In the Letter *Scripturae Sacrae affectus*, Pope Francis insists on the need to understand the words contained in Sacred Scripture in order to experience the love of God, which is “priceless” and capable of transforming one’s life, awakening in the depths of one’s heart the desire of wanting to fully correspond to that love. The *Sunday of the Word of God* is an opportunity to make known to young people “the Word of the Lord, with all its beauty, with all its spiritual strength”, as stated in the aforementioned Letter. Here are some formation proposals and testimonials.

## EXPERIENCE A BIBLICAL PASSAGE FIRST HAND!

The *Biblical drama* is an active method, which promotes the profound encounter between the Word of God and the actual life of every person, based on the interaction between the biblical message conveyed by the Spirit and the human experience of each young per-

son. Each person is invited to see themselves in the text, stimulated by the biblical passage, meditated on and represented in a new form. In this way one inwardly associates aspects of themselves and their life, freely expressing what he/she feels in the group. The deep resonance of every young person is shared through different languages: verbal-emotional sharing, pictorial chart, picture-language, interaction with concrete symbolic expressions, etc. Learn more about this methodology on the website:

<https://www.bibliodramma.com/metologia>

## BECOME A CRISTONAUT@!

*Cristonaut@s* is a website that aims at putting the New Evangelization into action by offering biblical-spiritual training to young people and other pastoral workers through Conferences, Online and In-presence Courses, Biblical Workshops, Spiritual Retreats, Evangelization and Missionary Programs, using the new information and communication technologies. This initiative is supported by an international

team of Catholic Christians of different languages (Spanish, English, Portuguese and Italian) who, following the guidelines of the Pope and the Bishops, want to spread the Gospel following the example of Ramon Pané, one of the greatest figures of evangelization in America. To become a criston @ uta go to the website:

<https://www.cristonautas.com/>

## KNOW THE BIBLE!

The *St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology* is a non-profit Bible research and training institute that promotes the study of the Holy Scriptures - which transform life - according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is at the service of all the faithful with tools of analysis and study - from books and publications to multimedia and online courses. You can find all the training programs on the website: <https://stpaulcenter.com/>

Other ecclesiastical organizations offer various resources for biblical formation. Here are some links:

- <https://www.usccb.org/offices/new-american-bible/study-materials>

- <http://www.knowhowsphere.net/Bases2.aspx>
- <https://feyvida.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/feyvida-volantedepronamasbiblicos-v12.pdf>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Upk\\_3nGTP2g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Upk_3nGTP2g)

## THE WORD OF GOD ON YOUR PHONE

*Laudate* by Aycka Soft is the most popular and complete free Catholic App. It is available in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Italian and others. It offers daily Mass readings (with the Saint of the day and reflections), the Liturgy of the Hours, items for personal prayer starting with a daily Bible verse, several Podcasts on the Word of God, etc. This App should not be missing on your phone. It is available for *Android* and *iOS* operating systems:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.aycka.apps.MassReadings>
- <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/laudate-1-catholic-app/id499428207#platform=iphone>



### LECTIO DIVINA FOR EVERY DAY.

**YES!**

The Carmelite Order offers everyone, especially in this time of confine-

ment due to the covid-19 pandemic, the opportunity to pray with the Holy Scriptures according to the method of *Lectio Divina*, which was developed by the Holy Fathers and promoted

again in the Church after the Second Vatican Council, so as to help deepen one's faith and the sentiments of Jesus by meditating on his word daily, according to the liturgical calendar.

The daily *Lectio Divina* is available in several languages. Visit the website: <https://ocarm.org/>



### THE BIBLE HAS TRANSFORMED MY LIFE!

The Bible touches people's lives in many ways. Check out some of these testimonials.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM70gegk-a8> (the testimony of Giacomo Poretti)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeC\\_Ez6cY7w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeC_Ez6cY7w) (the testimony of some Catholics in Argentina)

Note: Organizers of the Sunday should look for some testimonies in their own language.



### DOMESTIC LIFE, FERTILE GROUND FOR THE SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD

“Stay home” has been the repeated slogan of the pandemic. This invitation has tested our sense of solidarity and discipline as citizens. It has also been a good opportunity to develop creativity, to explore new dimensions of family life and to rediscover the home as a place for prayer and communion of faith. We, missionary disciples of Jesus, have lived this opportunity as a school of listening to the Word of God and of discernment that has led us to experience our ecclesial communion beyond certain religious practices and our presence in the Churches.

The aim of the present proposal is to elicit discernment in the light of the evangelising project suggested by Jesus in the New Testament, so that we can assess our process of faith and evangelization lived in the domestic Church, as members of a family and as missionaries called to announce the Good News. In the Synoptic Gospels we find some of Jesus’ instructions for living the domestic mission. In particular, Jesus sending out the 72 disciples: «Whatev-

er house you enter, first say: “Peace be to this house! And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you”» (Lk 10:5-9).

In these words of Jesus we can see a complete evangelising itinerary: enter the house, live in it and from there evangelise the city. Similar texts by Matthew (10: 11-14) and Mark (6: 10-11) confirm this pattern. In fact, Jesus’ normal practice is through his discourse and becomes a paradigm for the disciples who follow him.

### ENTER INTO THE REALITY OF EVERY HOME

Community meeting places give the idea of a place for liturgical assemblies or fraternal fellowship, but do not normally indicate our individual or family places such as a house or a room. A

house of ancient times (Hebrew: bayit; Greek: oikía / oikós; Latin: domus) does not have the same sociological sense as urban houses do today. Our homes are more varied and complex. They are mainly living spaces, which provide intimacy for the inhabitants. They are lived in by individuals or small groups of friends, couples or families with few children. Houses in the city have been designed more as a space where personal freedom is protected and defended and not as a place for community gatherings. It is not strange that neighbours do not know each other and that the very idea of integration is troublesome for the majority. It is not easy to break down the walls of prejudice or build bridges to foster a culture of encounter, even if a fragile wall of a few centimetres separates us.

The domestic models presented in the Bible, although they tend to be mostly of large families, such as that of Jacob (Gen 46: 1-27), are varied: a widow of Zarephath with her only son (1Kings 17: 8- 24), childless couples like Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18: 2-3), the sisters Martha and Mary (Lk 10: 38-42), or individual people, like Elijah or John the Baptist, who live in the desert

(1 Kings 19: 1-18; Mk 1: 4-6). Jesus also enters the house of Simon Peter, in Capernaum, on a Saturday, heals his sick mother-in-law, eats with them and from there goes to the city gate (Mk 1: 29-31). Peter, meekly following God’s voice, overcomes all apprehension and enters the house of an important officer of the Roman army, Cornelius, announces the Gospel, baptizes everyone in the house and stays with them (Acts 10: 1-48). In all these realities God enters to announce the good news, to transform situations, to propose new beginnings.

In light of these testimonies, let us ask ourselves:

- Who lives in my house?
- If Jesus entered my house, what would he find?
- What would I ask him to do for me (for us)?
- How do we live our faith at home?
- Did I stay in contact with the parish community or apostolic group during the pandemic? Did I feel that they were close to me (us)?



## LIVING THE REALITY OF THE HOME

The reality of each home tends to be unique, even if there are similar situations. The first thing Jesus suggests to us is to greet the family that asks for peace for that house. This is the custom in the Middle East: in Hebrew and in Arabic, peace is invoked in the greeting. The Risen Lord does so with his disciples in contexts of fear and insecurity (*Jn 20: 19-23, 26*) and eats with them while announcing the Good News of Easter (*Lk 24: 36-53*). Paul does the same when he greets his communities: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil 1:2-6*).

In this pandemic time, our hearts have been filled with many fears that go to every corner of the house. The starting point, therefore, is to welcome peace so that it opens hearts and allows

us to continue exploring other aspects that need to be healed and transformed. And there is nothing more natural and encouraging to do than domestic customs, including sharing food. But, first of all, we have to leave behind many distractions that hinder dialogue, and then encourage being together.

*Social networks*, for example, have been great supporters in overcoming the pain caused by isolation, tools for study and work, tools that allow spiritual accompaniment. Nevertheless, at the same time, they can "stupefy" us and make us live a parallel virtual world next to real people who we avoid and who need us.

Jesus' visit to Simon Peter's home became so regular that it is there that the evangelist situates everything else in the life and teaching of Jesus, such as when the house was so full that they had to remove part of the roof so that Jesus could heal a paralytic (*Mk 2: 1-12*) or when Jesus' family was looking for him and, waiting for him to leave the house, he invited them to become part of the new family of his disciples (*Mk 3: 20, 31-35*). Peter's house became the house of Jesus and his disciples; the same can be said of his boat (Cf. *Lk 5: 1-11*). The

change of Simon's name to Peter also reflects this profound transformation in the life of the apostle. We can imagine him speaking of Jesus in words similar to Paul's, recalling how his life was changed: "*it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me*" (*Gal 2:20*).

Paolo was a privileged witness of this experience. His testimony of Jesus Christ had an impact on the lives of many who, by hosting him, also opened their homes to the Master so that he could stay there with his disciples. In Latin these houses are called "*Domus Ecclesiae*". Paul greets them with great affection in his letters: Aquila and Prisca (*1Cor 16: 19; Rm 16: 3-5*); Stephanas of Corinth (*1Cor 1: 16; 16: 15*); Philemon (*Philem 1: 2*); Nympha (*Col 4: 15*); Onesiphorus (*2 Tim 1:16*). In fact, this familiar touch of the first Christian communities is perceived in their conflicts (cf. *1 Cor 1: 11; 5: 1; 7: 1-17; Eph 5: 22; 6: 4*) and in the way in which Paul addresses them (cf. *Gal 4: 19; 1Cor 4: 15*).

Let's evaluate:

- Is the presence of God felt in my house?

- How can I foster a spiritual environment?
- Is reading and listening to the Word of God important to me (us)?
- What can I do to improve my relationships at home? Do I spend time with them?
- Has the Church really drawn near to the reality of my family with its way of evangelising?
- Do I feel that families are a priority for the pastoral care of the parish?

## EVANGELISING FROM THE REALITY OF THE HOME

In two of the passages mentioned on Jesus' activity in Peter's house, it was explained that the walls or the roof had to be removed in order to make room for others in this new reality of the family of Jesus' disciples (Cf. *Mk 2: 1-12; 3: 20, 31-35*). It seems that the parable of the mustard seed expresses these cases: "*it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches*" (*Mt 13:32*).



The house transformed by the presence of Jesus is called to grow; life and hope flourish within it; it becomes an explosion of contagious joy like that of the poor distressed woman who finds the lost coin: «*When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost'*» (Lk 15: 9).

The faith of a family that lives the Good News of the Risen Jesus becomes the leaven that “*a woman took and*

*mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened*” (Mt 13:33). From this new perspective, our way of seeing the world also changes. The whole planet is perceived as our “*common home*” (*Laudato Si'*, 1, 13, 232) and humanity as a “*great family*” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 26, 62). Pope Francis clearly states this with these words:

“Nor can I reduce my life to relationships with a small group, even my own family; I cannot know my-

self apart from a broader network of relationships. [...] My relationship with those whom I respect has to take account of the fact that they do not live only for me, nor do I live only for them. Our relationships, if healthy and authentic, open us to others who expand and enrich us. [...] authentic and mature love and true friendship can only take root in hearts open to growth through relationships with others. As couples or friends,

we find that our hearts expand as we step out of ourselves and embrace others” (*Fratelli tutti*, 89).

Let's evaluate:

- Are the walls of my house a limit to my dreams and my vocation
- Have I felt called to care for others outside my family circle or my friends?
- Have I felt that families are a priority for the pastoral care of the parish?
- Have I felt the joy of giving generously (Cf. *Acts* 20:35)?
- Has the Church helped me to be more community minded?
- Do I live in the world as a common home?
- Do I feel part of the great human family?





## The Word of God in personal prayer

- "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path". (*Ps 119:105*)
- Just as on a dark path we look for a lantern to light the way so as not to stumble, in the same way we must seek the light for our life in the Word of God.
- We take advantage of the various methods that the Church offers to her children so "that the Word of God may become more and more their spiritual nourishment" (*Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, Introduction, B*).

# Reading the Gospel with Blessed Antonio Chévrier



Father Antonio Chévrier, priest of the diocese of Lyon in France, in the parish of Saint-André de La Guillotière had an insight on Christmas night 1856. He realized that the main aspects of the ways of Christ, the savior of the world, are not only contemplation, but rather are a model to which one must conform. To express the feelings that were in his soul after this night of enlightenment, he said: "I have decided to follow Jesus more closely"!<sup>1</sup>.

To follow Jesus, conform to his ways and remain truly united in love should be the goals of every Christian, but to achieve them, it is necessary to know him. Knowledge of Jesus is not only contemplative but is also related to action. If you look at the Gospel, you see that Jesus not only wanted to give examples, but also guidelines for acting, because he is a "Master and a Model"<sup>2</sup>.

The path proposed by Blessed Chévrier to *draw near* to Jesus was called

*Study of the Gospel* and can be followed personally but also by the family, in a group or in a small community, such that those who practice it can achieve the following objectives, by following the steps described below<sup>3</sup>:

- a. *Let yourself be known and loved by the Father:* The initiative always belongs to the Father. It is he who draws everyone to the Son; the desire and joy of knowing, loving and serving him is his initiative. In the *Study* one feels being generated by grace and of experiencing an event of grace.
- b. *Being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to walk in the Spirit:* In the *Study*, the disciple lets himself be led by the Spirit of Jesus Christ towards the whole truth, in order to live it and to witness to it in the world.
- c. *Knowing Jesus Christ in his many ways of being present:* The *Study*

of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures allows us to recognize him in the events of life, and it is precisely in them that we must discover the novelty of his person, as revealed in the Scriptures.

- d. *Becoming witnesses of Jesus Christ:* This is a *Study* that makes the person suitable to speak as a witness of Jesus Christ, full of joy, courage and boldness.
- e. *To be servants of the poor:* The *Study* of the Word that became Flesh leads the disciple to embrace, in Him and like Him, the poverty to serve the poor who have been relegated to the lowest place. This *Study* allows all people to contemplate the poor in the mystery of Christ, and at the same time to be introduced to the mystery of the poor. Only by knowing Jesus Christ is the disciple given the capacity to understand the poor, to search for ways to transform their lives and accompany them towards the freedom of love.

## CHOICE OF TEXT

The reading always begins with a text from Scripture, especially from the Gospel, according to the aspect that one wants to delve into more deeply. It is also possible to choose some of the texts that the Liturgy of the day suggests in order to systematically follow the Word of God ordered and proposed by the Church in the Sunday and Weekday Lectionaries.

*Reading the Gospel* in community makes it possible to discover the richness with which the Word resounds in the human heart, making their personal experiences present and enlightening their particular life situations. In this case, the text is chosen by one or all of the members of the group.

## OPENING PRAYER

The reading begins with a moment of silence followed by a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the gift of knowledge of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Alfred Ancel, *Lo Studio del Vangelo in Seguire Cristo più da vicino* by Prado Italy. N. 5-6 - September - December 2004. p. 63

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Prado General Council «Fa, o Cristo, che ti conosca»: *Lo Studio del Vangelo al Prado*. Document at the end of the 2009 Summer Training Session dedicated to the Study of the Gospel. October 2010. pp. 14-20. 38-39.



## PROCLAMATION OF THE TEXT

Then, the text is read or proclaimed slowly and with a strong voice as appropriate.

## REFLECTION, PERSONAL STUDY AND PUTTING THE TEXT INTO ACTION

This is followed by a time of *reflection* and *personal study* of the text. Listening, reflection and contemplation focus first of all on the actions, gestures, words and manners of Jesus Christ. The other characters are considered to the extent that they allow you to know Jesus better. One can also refer to parallel texts in the Scriptures or to comments by the Fathers of the Church or by the Magisterium to gain greater knowledge and objectivity in the reading.

To apply the text in a personal way, it is good to ask:

- How does the Holy Spirit help me to discover the relevance of the person of the Lord Jesus today and to apply his teachings to the reality and context in which I live?

- What should my response be to listening to the Word and considering it in-depth?
- At this time, how does this Word shed light on and guide my life, the life of my family, the life of those around me (friends, colleagues, neighbors) and the life of the Church?

Only through a reciprocal relationship between Jesus and mankind is it possible to discover the newness of his Word in the events of life itself. You are encouraged to put your own comments and commitments in writing so that they can be followed up personally or shared with others if the reading is done in community.

## SHARING

If the reading is done in community, this is the time to share the fruits of the work. It is a sharing of faith and theological insights that is done naturally and simply, without discussion or debate.

## FINAL PRAYER

After a time of silence, a prayer of thanks is said for what God has allowed

us to know about Jesus through this reading. If it was done in community, some or all can say a prayer that echoes what was shared.



# Meditating on the Gospel of the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time



The Gospel of Mark guides the liturgical cycle B. This Gospel written with a poor vocabulary and a simple style corresponds wonderfully to the message of Jesus and the problems and interests of the people of the time in which it was written. We can certainly say that this correspondence is still relevant today. It is divided into two main parts (*Mk 1:14 – 8: 30; 8:31 – 16: 8*), preceded by a Prologue (*Mk 1:1-13*) and followed by an Appendix (*Mk 16:9-20*). The aim of the evangelist is to pro-

gressively reveal the identity of Jesus and the identity of the disciple. Jesus is the awaited Messiah (*Mk 8:27-30*), the “Son of man” of a human condition and subject to suffering (*Mk 1:1; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34*) and the “Son of God” of a divine nature and subject to glorification (*Mk 1:1, 15:39; 16:19*). The disciple, on the other hand, is called to be with Jesus, to accompany him at his side, to listen to his teachings and to contemplate his wonders; to know and understand him in depth; to enter into

communion with him; to continue his mission, exercising the ministry of the Word, communicating his Mystery and confirming that preaching with works (*Mk 3:14-15*)<sup>4</sup>.

The Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, presents the first disciples being called by Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee - an event that for them marked the beginning of a journey of personal union with Jesus to reveal the mystery of his being. It is an opportunity for every Christian to renew his commitment to follow and bear witness to Jesus despite his own fragility. Let's be challenged by his Word.

Then, it is suggested to meditate on the text of *Mk 1:14-20* (*The call of the first disciples*) using the methodology proposed by Blessed Chévrier.

## OPENING PRAYER

Begin by invoking the presence of the divine persons or one of them in

particular, using one's own words or a prayer similar to the one below:

*O Word! O Christ! How beautiful you are! How great you are! Who can know you? Who can understand you?*

*Grant, O Christ, that I know you and love you! Since you are the light, let a ray of this divine light invade my poor soul, so that I can see and understand you.*

*Put in me a great faith in you, so that all your words are like lights for me that illuminate me and make me come to you and follow you along the paths of justice and truth*

*O Christ! O Word! You are my Lord, my one and only Master. Speak, I want to listen to you and put your word into practice.*

*I want to hear your divine word because I know it comes from heaven. I want to listen to it, meditate on it, and put it into practice, because in your word there is life, joy, peace and happiness.*

*Speak, Lord, you are my Lord and my Master, and I want to hear only you. Amen.*

Antonio Chévrier



<sup>4</sup> Cf. Francisco Pérez Herrero, *Evangelio según San Marcos*, La Casa de la Biblia, Coedizione. Spagna, 1989. pp. 13-18.



## PROCLAIMING THE TEXT

Now after John was arrested Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. (*Mk 1:14-20*)

## PERSONAL COMMENTS

The following questions may help you delve more deeply into the text:

- What does Jesus do (pay attention to the verbs)?
- What does Jesus say?
- What manners do you discover in Jesus?
- What do the disciples do (pay attention to the verbs)?
- How do the disciples behave?

Remember to take note of what you discover or what attracts your attention.

### PARALLEL TEXTS, COMMENTS OF THE HOLY FATHERS OR OF THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH

Compare your personal comments with Pope Francis' comment on this text.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee (*Mk 1:14-20*) and proclaims the Gospel with John's own words: the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near, be converted.

John prepared the way for Jesus. And Jesus followed it. Pre-

paring the way, even preparing our lives, belongs to God, to God's love for each of us. He does not make us Christians by spontaneous generation. He prepares our way, preparing our lives for a long time. It seems that Simon, Andrew, James, John were definitively elected here; but this does not mean that from this moment they were "definitively faithful". In reality, they made mistakes: they made non-Christian proposals to the Lord, in fact they denied him, Peter more than the others. They got scared and left, they abandoned the Lord.

Hannah, the second wife of Elkanah (*Cf. 1 Sam 1: 1-8*), was barren, crying when the other wife, Peninnah, who had children, mocked her. But the cry of Anna was the preparation for the birth of the great Samuel. Thus the Lord prepares us for so many generations. And when things don't go well, he gets involved in history and adjusts things.

There are sinners, men and women, in the genealogy of Jesus. But how did the Lord do it?

He got involved; he corrected the way; he set things right. We think of David, a great sinner and then a great saint. The Lord knows. When the Lord tells us: with eternal love I have loved you, he is referring to this. For many generations the Lord has been thinking of us. He accompanies us by experiencing our same feelings as when we approach marriage, when we are expecting a child: in every moment of our history, he is waiting for us and accompanies us.

This is the eternal love of the Lord. Eternal but concrete. A love that is also an artisan love, because he is making history and preparing the way for each of us. And this is God's love. [...] He is the Lord of preparation, who has always loved us and never abandons us. Maybe it's a difficult act of faith to believe this, it's true. Because our rationalism makes us say: but why does the Lord, who has so many people to care about, think about me? Yet he has prepared the way for me, with our mothers, our grandmothers,



our fathers, our grandparents, and great-grandparents, all of them: the Lord does this. And his love is real, eternal and that of an artisan.

*Meditation,  
Domus Sanctae Marthae,  
January 13, 2014*

#### PUTTING THE TEXT INTO PRACTICE

To make the teachings of the text your own:

- Remember the time when the Lord called you to be his missionary disciple.

- Does this choice make you feel his love, does it help you be happy?
- How did you prepare for this moment (place, time, age)?
- Who helped to make it possible?
- With what attitude did you answer?
- How can you collaborate so that the Lord Jesus can meet other people and call them into his service?
- What do you need to change in yourself to be more faithful every day to the call you have received and to the mission that has been entrusted to you?

Remember to write down your thoughts and commitments.

#### SHARING

If the meditation on the Gospel has been done in community, this is the time to share with others what was reflected on.

#### FINAL PRAYER

This moment of introduction to the Word can be concluded with a spontaneous prayer or with the one suggested below:

*Lord Jesus, here I am, you invite me to leave my nets and fol-*

*low you. Millions of people need to hear your word. You invite me to be a fisher of men with creativity and enthusiasm, with initiative and risk-taking, with courage and audacity.*

*I realize that I have not always decided to leave what is an obstacle to following you totally. However, I am infinitely grateful to you for your call. I want to know you more and more, so that your criteria can illuminate and guide my thoughts, intentions and actions.*

*Give me the passion I need to make you known to everyone I am in contact with every day. I only wish that when others look at or listen to me, they will discover you Jesus, tireless fisher of men. Amen.*





*"Lord, teach us to pray!"*(cf. Lk 11:1) Today more than ever, the desire to learn to pray is felt in the hearts of believers. Over the centuries, the great masters of Eastern and Western spirituality have identified methods and given advice, defining more or less effective techniques for learning the art of prayer.

In recent years there has been an exponential growth in the number of schools of prayer in the pastoral field, as an effective educational proposal for the human and spiritual enhancement of Christian communities, highlighting the burning desire of the human heart to meet the heart of God through prayer. So, we have to ask ourselves what is the most suitable type for praying well.

The noun "*precarius*" (poor, precarious), from which the verb "*to pray*" derives prepares us to understand an essential point from which to start, that is, the poverty of human nature. Prayer arises from a desire to fill a need which one lacks and which can only be obtained by asking for it.

The plea of the disciples on the importance of learning how to pray translates, in this sense, into the need of every person to bridge the separation

with God by allowing Him to enter one's own heart. While invisible and apparently silent, God manifests himself in the dialogue that unfolds in the heart of each person ("*cor ad cor loquitur*"). A dialogue, which during many times of "pious prayer", risks turning into a monologue in which one vents one's most diverse desires, relegating the divine partner to be forced to listen in silence. The echo of our ego, which we hear in our petitions, is the clear sign of divine silence.

Preceded and accompanied by God's action, the way to get back on track is listening to his *Word*. When asked whether it is possible to pray with the *Word of God*, we respond very clearly: it is the source of prayer. The first place of speaking belongs to God, which is followed by man listening, since "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (cf. Rom 10:17).

A Jewish story helps shed light on the importance of the *Word* in the context of prayer. An elderly rabbi, a teacher of prayer, Rabbi Shlomo, was questioned by one of his disciples: "Master, why did God not listen to my requests? I talked to him for a long time and for hours

I insisted on my needs". The rabbi answered immediately: "Because you did not allow him to speak". This short story highlights the real condition that prepares the believer to successfully pray.

The *Word of God* is the beginning of the history of salvation which He accomplishes with us and which illuminates the steps of human life. Learning to pray with the *Divine Word* means identifying deeply with the mystery of God, who illuminates and reveals the mystery of man. Following the divine footprints that we discover in his *Word*, which we have received, meditated and savored during personal prayer, introduces us to living into the wisdom-filled dynamic of walking along guided by a consoling presence that reveals the beauty and goodness of the believer's life.

The *Divine Word* creates the foundation that supports the house of prayer, in which God is welcomed and the memorial of salvation is celebrated. It is astonishing to reflect on the methodology of Jesus' "calling" which is echoed in many passages of the Gospel. The extraordinary nature is understood in the essential relational dynamic estab-

lished between the Master and his listeners. The episode of Zacchaeus is an example of this. The effect of the conversion occurs in the simple, essential, extraordinarily profound gesture of calling him by name. A man of a thousand labels is remembered by God by his real name. This simple episode is transformed into a celebration of salvation.

Prayer is essentially a desire to be loved, remembered and called by God. The reading of the sacred texts suggests the words that can become a response to the divine call in the heart of man. It is in this prayerful dimension that we can interpret the episode of Jesus' visit to the house of Bethany. The two sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, reflect two examples of attitudes for the spiritual life. The first, breathless after having carried out a thousand tasks, prepares her heart to welcome the Divine Master with the insipid certainty of those who try to make room for God with a heart that is already occupied. The second is the prototype of the believer who lets herself be enveloped and welcomed by the divine mystery, discovering in it the character of her being. "*The better part*" thus be-



comes the necessary condition for living a prayer of effective dialogue between man and God.

The Word also arouses the desire to pray for others who share our human condition. This task is directly measured by personal progress in the journey of faith in response to the question “*can a blind person guide a blind person?*” (cf. Lk 6:39). The book of Psalms is a significant example that we find in the Bible. It is a book of prayer in which human words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, become the *Word of God*. It is possible to pray with the *Word*

and it is also possible that the *Word* becomes prayer through the poverty of our hearts enriched by the presence of God. The prayer of the *Word* and the prayed *Word* create the necessary conditions in which to grasp and feel the real presence of God.

The Church that *proclaims, guards and transmits the Divine Word* is to be considered the school of prayer where one can learn to pray. It is necessary to have valid teachers of prayer in the Church who guide persons along a path of progressively learning the art of how to pray. One learns that the *Word of God*

is the main reference and the source from which to draw the pure, crystalline water of Divine Wisdom. For all this to happen, however, it is necessary to pray, and pray well, not with words, but with the *Word!*

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

- Invoke the Holy Spirit... *Veni Sancte Spiritus...Come Holy Spirit*
- Create the right environment that fosters concentration: avoid noisy



places and areas that are too large. Your own room is a good place.

- Find a specific passage from Sacred Scripture to pray about.
- Be conscious that you are in the presence of the *Living Word*.
- Read the chosen passage attentively, either softly or aloud, aware that you are not reading a newspaper.
- After reading, mark the words that aroused the greatest interest.
- Reflect on the highlighted words. What do they mean? What do they suggest for life? To whom is this passage addressed?
- What does the *Word* that was listened have to do with my personal life, in the condition in which I find myself?
- Think of questions, requests to ask God, do not forget to involve others.
- Reflect on what God wants of me.
- Praying with the *Word*: let your life be penetrated by the *Word* that was listened to.
- Give thanks to God and with this conclude the moment of personal prayer.



## Appendix

# Church and the Word of God

- "Devotion to sacred Scripture, a living and tender love" for the written word of God: this is the legacy" that the Church Fathers and Popes have bequeathed to the Church through their lives and their works. Some of them consecrated their "lives to make the divine writings increasingly accessible to others", like St. Jerome. Let us be guided by his teachings to let ourselves fall in love more and more with the "flesh of Scripture" which is Christ. (cf. *Scripturae sacrae affectus*)



**T**he celebration of the *Sunday of the Word of God* this year gives voice to St. Jerome, Father and Doctor of the Church. The 16th centenary of his death was commemorated by Pope Francis with the Apostolic Letter *Scripturae Sacrae affectus*, promulgated on September 30, 2020.

### EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY ON MK 1:14-20

In commenting on this Sunday's Gospel, St. Jerome focuses on two aspects: after the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus, instead of going to Jerusalem, the center of political and religious power, goes to the region of Galilee, a periphery, and from there he announces the *good news* of God's Kingdom.

**"Now after John was arrested,  
Jesus came to Galilee"  
(Mk 1:14).**

The story is well known, and it appears clear to the listeners, even without our explanation. But let us pray to him who has the key of David, he who opens and no

one closes, who closes and no one opens (*Rev 3: 7*), so that the hidden way of the Gospel may open to us, and we too can say together with David: "Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things of your law" (*Ps 119: 18*). To the crowds the Lord spoke in parables, and spoke outwardly. He did not speak within, that is, in the spirit; he spoke with the external language, according to the letter. Let us pray to the Lord that he may introduce us into his mysteries, let us enter his secret chamber, and we too can say, together with the bride of the Song of Songs: "The king has brought me into his chambers" (*Ct 1: 3*). The apostle says that a veil was placed over the eyes of Moses (*2 Cor 3: 13*). I say that not only in the law, but also in the Gospel there is a veil over the eyes of those who do not know. The Jew listened to him, but did not understand him: for him there was a veil over the Gospel. The Gentiles listen, the heretics listen, but for them, too, there is the veil. Let us abandon the letter together with the Jews, and follow

the spirit with Jesus: and not because we must condemn the letter of the Gospel (everything that was written has come true), but to be able to gradually ascend to higher things. "After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee". Last Sunday we said that John is the law, while Jesus is the Gospel. In fact, John says: "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals" (*Mk 1:7*). And elsewhere: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (*Jn 3: 30*). The comparison between John and Jesus is the comparison between the law and the Gospel. John says again: "I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (*Mk 1:8*): this is the gospel. So Jesus comes back, because John was locked up in prison. The law is locked up, it no longer has the former freedom: but from the law we pass to the Gospel. Pay attention to what Mark says: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee". He did not go to Judea or Jerusalem, but to Galilee of the Gentiles.

In short, Jesus returns to Galilee: Galilee in our language translates the Greek *Katakyliste*. Because before the coming of the Savior there was nothing lofty in that region, but rather, everything was degraded: lust, abjection, shamelessness were rampant and men were prey to vices and bestial pleasures.

### "Proclaiming the good news of God" (Mk 1:14)

As far as I remember, I have never heard of the kingdom of heaven talked about in the law, in the prophets or in the psalms, but only in the Gospel. In fact, it is only after the advent of the one who said: "For in fact, the kingdom of God is among you" (*Lk 17:21*), that the kingdom of God is open to us. So Jesus came preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force" (*Mt 11:12*): before the advent of the Savior and before the light of the Gospel, before Christ opened the door of



heaven to the thief, all the souls of the saints were taken to hell. Jacob says: "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." (*Gen 37: 35*). Who does not go to hell if Abraham is in hell? (*Lk 16:22*). In the law, Abraham is taken to hell: in the Gospel, the thief goes to heaven. We do not look down on Abraham, in whose bosom we would all want to rest: but we prefer Christ to Abraham, we prefer the Gospel to the law. We read that, after

the resurrection of Christ, many saints appeared in the holy city. Our Lord and Savior preached on earth and preached in hell: and when he died, he descended into hell to free the souls who were imprisoned there. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (*Mk 1:14-15*). He did not say: the kingdom of God has already come; but he said the kingdom has come near. And that



is, before I suffer the passion, before I shed my blood, the kingdom of God will not open; for that, it is now approaching, but it is not here because I have not yet suffered the passion. "Repent and believe in the good news" (*Mk 1:15*): no longer believe in the law, but in the Gospel, or, better, believe in the Gospel by means of the law, as it is written: "through faith to faith" (*Rom 1:17*). Faith in the law strengthens faith in the gospel.

(Jerome, *Comment in Mark, 1-2*)

### THE WORD OF GOD IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

St. Jerome offers some advice to Letta, a Roman noblewoman, about the education of her daughter Paola. He urges her to teach her daughter to value, know and pray with Holy Scripture.

"Let her treasures be not silks or gems but manuscripts of the holy scriptures; and in these let her think less of gilding, and Babylonian parchment, and arabesque patterns, than of correctness and

accurate punctuation. Let her begin by learning the psalter, and then let her gather rules of life out of the proverbs of Solomon. From the Preacher let her gain the habit of despising the world and its vanities. Let her follow the example set in Job of virtue and of patience. Then let her pass on to the gospels never to be laid aside when once they have been taken in hand. Let her also drink in with a willing heart the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles".

St. Jerome, *Letter CVII, 12*

"She ought to rise at night to recite prayers and psalms; to sing hymns in the morning... let her pass the day in this way, and when night comes let it find her still engaged in them. Let reading (the holy books) follow prayer, and prayer follow reading".

St. Jerome, *Letter CVII, 9*

Her tongue while still tender must be steeped in the sweetness of the psalms.

St. Jerome, *Letter CVII, 4*



### HOMILY ON THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD 2020

In St. Peter's Basilica, commenting on the texts of the liturgy of that day, on which the *Sunday of the Word of God* was celebrated for the first time, Pope Francis invites everyone to always lovingly welcome into the depths of their heart the gift of the *Divine Word* contained in Sacred Scripture. Here is the reflection of the Holy Father.

*"Jesus began to preach"* (Mt 4:17). With these words, the evangelist Matthew introduces the ministry of Jesus. The One who is the Word of God has come to speak with us, in his own words and by his own life. On this first Sunday of the Word of God, let us go to the roots of his preaching, to the very source of the word of life. Today's Gospel (Mt 4:12-23) helps us to know *how, where and to whom* Jesus began to preach.

1. *How did he begin?* With a very simple phrase: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (v. 17). This is the main message of all Jesus' sermons: to tell us that

the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What does this mean? The kingdom of heaven means the reign of God, that is, the way in which God reigns through his relationship with us. Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is *at hand*, that God is near. Here is the novelty, the first message: God is not far from us. The One who dwells in heaven has come down to earth; he became man. He has torn down walls and eliminated distances. We ourselves did not deserve this: he came down to meet us. Now this nearness of God to his people is the way he has done things from the beginning, also in the Old Testament. He said to his people: "*Imagine: what nation has its gods so near to it as I am near to you?*" (cf. Dt 4:7). And this nearness became flesh in Jesus.

This is a joyful message: God came to visit us in person, by becoming man. He did not embrace our human condition out of duty, no, but out of love. For love, he took on our human nature, for one embraces what one loves. God took our human nature because

he loves us and desires freely to give us the salvation that, alone and unaided, we cannot hope to attain. He wants to stay with us and give us the beauty of life, peace of heart, the joy of being forgiven and feeling loved.

We can now understand the direct call of Jesus: "Repent", in other words, "Change your life". Change your life, for a new way of living has begun. The time when

you lived for yourself is over; now is the time for living with and for God, with and for others, with and for love. Today Jesus speaks those same words to you: "Take heart, I am here with you, allow me to enter and your life will change". Jesus knocks at the door. That is why the Lord gives you his word, so that you can receive it like a love letter he has written to you, to help you realize that he is at





your side. His Word consoles and encourages us. At the same time it challenges us, frees us from the bondage of our selfishness and summons us to conversion. His Word has the power to change our lives and to lead us out of darkness into the light. This is the power of his Word.

2. If we consider *where* Jesus started his preaching, we see that he began from the very places that were then thought to be "in darkness". Both the first Reading and the Gospel speak to us of people who "*sat in the region and shadow of death*". They are the inhabitants of "*the Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles*" (Mt 4:15-16; cf. Is 8:23; 9:1). Galilee of the gentiles, this region where Jesus began his preaching ministry, had been given this name because it was made up of people of different races and was home to a variety of peoples, languages and cultures. It was truly "on the road by the sea", a cross-roads. Fishermen, businessmen and foreigners all dwelt there. It

was definitely not the place to find the religious purity of the chosen people. Yet Jesus started there: not from the atrium of the temple of Jerusalem, but from the opposite side of the country, from Galilee of the gentiles, from the border region. He started from a periphery.

There is a message in this for us: the Word that saves does not go looking for untouched, pristine and safe places. Rather, He comes into our complexity and darkness. Now, as then, God wants to visit the very places where we think He should never go. How often do we close the door, preferring to keep our confusion, our darkness and our duplicity hidden. We keep these locked up within us, approaching the Lord with some rote prayers, wary lest his truth stir our hearts. And this is hidden hypocrisy. But as today's Gospel tells us: "*Jesus went about all Galilee [...] preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity*" (v. 23). He passed through *all* of that varied and complex region. In the same way, he is not



afraid to explore the terrain of our hearts and to enter the roughest and most difficult corners of our lives. He knows that his mercy alone can heal us, his presence alone can transform us and his word alone can renew us. So let us open the winding paths of our hearts – those interior paths that we do not want to look at or that we hide – to him, who walked “the road by the sea”; let us welcome his Word into our hearts, which is “*living and active [...] and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart*” (*Heb 4:12*).

3. Finally, to whom did Jesus begin to speak? The Gospel says that, “*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’*” (*Mt 4:18-19*). The first people to be called were fishermen: not people carefully chosen for their abilities or devout people of prayer in the temple, but ordinary people who worked.

Let us think about what Jesus said to them: *I will make you fishers of men*. He was speaking to fishermen, using the language they understood. Their lives changed on the spot. He called them where they were and as they were, in order to make them sharers in his mission. “*Immediately they left their nets and followed him*” (v. 20). Why *immediately*? Simply because they felt drawn. They did not hurry off because they had received an order, but because they were drawn by love. To follow Jesus, mere good works are not enough; we have to listen to his call daily. He, who alone knows us and who loves us fully, can summon us to cast out into the depths of life. Just as he did with the disciples who heard him.

That is why we need his Word: so that we can hear, amid the thousands of other words in our daily lives, that one Word that speaks to us not about things, but about life.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us make room inside ourselves for the Word of God! Each day, let us read a verse or two of the

Bible. Let us begin with the Gospel: let us keep it open on our table, carry it in our pocket or bag, read it on our cell phones, and allow it to inspire us daily. We will discover that God is close to us, that he dispels our darkness and, with great love, leads our lives into deep waters.

Francis Homily,  
January 26, 2020

### **GUIDELINES FOR LECTIO DIVINA**

At the conclusion of the Synod on *the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church*, Pope Benedict XVI published the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*. It explains how a *Lectio divina* should be conducted, that is, a “*prayerful reading*” of the Holy Scriptures.

*Lectio divina*, is truly “capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God’s word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God”. [296] I would like here to review the basic steps of this procedure.

It opens with the reading (*lectio*) of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: *what does the biblical text say in itself?* Without this, there is always a risk that the text will become a pretext for never moving beyond our own ideas. Next comes meditation (*meditatio*), which asks: *what does the biblical text say to us?* Here, each person, individually but also as a member of the community, must let himself or herself be moved and challenged. Following this comes prayer (*oratio*), which asks the question: *what do we say to the Lord in response to his word?* Prayer, as petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, is the primary way by which the word transforms us. Finally, *lectio divina* concludes with contemplation (*contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves *what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?* In the *Letter to the Romans*, Saint Paul tells us: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the



renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). The word of God appears here as a criterion for discernment: it 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). We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it arrives at action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.

We find the supreme synthesis and fulfillment of this process in the Mother of God. For every member of the faithful Mary is the model of docile acceptance of God's word, for she "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51); she discovered the profound bond which unites, in God's

great plan, apparently disparate events, actions and things.

Benedict XVI,  
*Verbum Domini*, 87

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN THE READING AND INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL TEXTS**

St. John Paul II, in his speech during the commemorative audience for the centenary of Leo XIII's Encyclical "*Providentissimus Deus*" and the fiftieth anniversary of Pius XII's "*Divino Afflante Spiritu*", stressed the importance of *prayer* in the *reading* and *interpretation* of biblical texts.

To respect the coherence of the faith of the Church and the inspiration of Scripture, Catholic exegesis must be careful not to stick to the human aspects of the biblical texts. It must also and above all help the Christian people to perceive the word of God more clearly in these texts, in order to receive it better, to live fully in communion with God.

To this end it is evidently necessary that the exegete himself perceive the divine word in the texts, and this is not possible for him except in the case in which his intellectual work is supported by an impulse of spiritual life.

In the absence of this support, exegetical research remains incomplete; it loses sight of its main purpose and confines itself to secondary tasks. It can also become a kind of escape. The scientific study of the human aspects of the texts alone can make us forget that the word of God invites everyone to go out of themselves to live in faith and charity.

In this regard, the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* recalled the particular character of Sacred Books and the resulting need for their interpretation: "Sacred Books - he declared - cannot be assimilated to ordinary writings, but, having been dictated by Holy Spirit himself and having a content of extreme gravity, mysterious and difficult in many respects, we always need, in order to understand and explain them, the com-

ing of the Holy Spirit himself, or his light and his grace, which we must certainly ask for in a 'humble prayer and to preserve through a sanctified life' (*Enchiridion Biblicum*, 89). In a shorter formula, borrowed from St. Augustine, the *Divino afflante Spiritu* expressed the same requirement: "*Orent ut intellegant!*" (*Enchiridion Biblicum*, 569).

Yes, to arrive at a fully valid interpretation of the words inspired by the Holy Spirit, we must ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit, for this, we must pray, pray a lot, ask in prayer for the inner light of the Spirit and docilely accept this light, ask for love, which alone makes one capable of understanding the language of God, who "is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). During the same work of interpretation, it is necessary to be in the presence of God as much as possible.

John Paul II,  
from the address  
on *The Interpretation  
of the Bible in the Church*,  
April 23, 1993.

# Catechesis and the Word of God in light of the new Directory



On June 25, 2020 the *Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization* presented the *Directory for Catechesis*, approved by Pope Francis on 23 March, the day on which the Church celebrates the memory of St. Turibio di Mogrovejo, faithful and passionate herald of the Gospel in South America in the 16th century.

In the wake of the previous catechetical directories of 1971 and 1997, the new document aims to *support* and *re-launch* the evangelizing mission of the whole Church and, in particular, *the service of catechesis*, in relation to today's awareness and circumstances. In fact, the special task of the time we are experiencing, as the Holy Father's exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* reminds us, is that of carrying out a courageous "missionary conversion" in all fields of ecclesial dynamics, which can be suitably "channeled for the evangelization of today's world" (EG 27).

*Between the Church, which "exists to evangelize" (EN 14), and the Word of God, which is the profound heart of evangelization, there is a bond of vital and compelling necessity (DC 283-289), a bond*

that runs transversally throughout the whole *Directory* and is like its most intimate soul. In light of this combination, it is possible to reread the entire document.

Starting from God's providential plan, which reveals his mystery of love to mankind, the *Directory* states: "*The Holy Spirit continues to fertilize the Church which lives on the Word of God* and always helps it to grow in the understanding of the Gospel, by sending it and supporting it in the work of evangelizing the world. The same Spirit, from within humanity, sows the seed of the Word; arouses desire and good works; prepares the acceptance of the Gospel and grants faith, so that, through the witness of the Church, men can recognize the presence and loving communication of God". The Church, which has the joy of guarding and transmitting the Word of life received as a gift, does so through Tradition and Sacred Scripture (DC 23-30).

There is no doubt that, among the numerous "forms" through which the "*service of the Word*" is achieved - that is, "the first proclamation; the various types of catechesis; the homily and

preaching; prayerful reading, also in the form of *lectio divina*; popular piety; the biblical apostolate; teaching theology; the scholastic teaching of religion; studies and meetings that link the Word of God and contemporary culture, also in an interreligious and intercultural confrontation" (DC 37) - *catechesis occupies a place of vital importance*.

In the heart of the Greek verb "*katēchein*" from which the word "catechesis" derives, it is possible to recognize the essential reference to the Word of God that *resounds* in the Church and in the hearts of men, as the current echo of an announcement of Life that has already conquered death forever. It can be affirmed with certainty that every type of catechesis - whether it is a *first proclamation of the Gospel* or an *itinerary of Christian initiation* or a path of ongoing formation; whether it is aimed at children and teenagers, or young people and adults - it is always a proclamation of the Word of God, which reveals the power of God's merciful love.

Recalling the indications already expressed in *Evangelii gaudium*, all of this is noted in the new *Directory for cat-*

*echesis* under the name of "*kerygmatic catechesis*": a catechesis that, arises from the Word and is based on it, and which is basically aimed at manifesting the *kerygma*, the "fire of the Spirit" that makes us believe in Jesus Christ and communicates the Father's mercy (DC 57-60).

It is from this consideration that the Christian community must make sure that its catechetical activity is putting their children in contact with the existential core of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and celebrated in the sacraments. In fact, in this time of the new evangelization, *catechesis is called to exploit the power of the Word more boldly*, making sure that the precious treasure of Scripture is available to every member of the faithful allowing them to meet and remain in communion with the Lord of life.

Perhaps it is precisely the simplicity of this consideration that, so to speak, *alleviates catechesis from what has burdened it over time*, often reducing it to a mere "teaching of the faith" that is detached from a lived experience or to a "moralistic exposition" far from an encounter with the Lord, who frees and internally renews the



human heart. Pope Francis illustrates this danger with these words: “There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance.”(EG 41)

In order for the catechetical proposal to be an authentic service to the Gospel, the *Directory* identifies some “*criteria for the proclamation of the Gospel message*” that allow catechesis to remain firmly inspired by the teaching of God narrated in the Sacred Scriptures.

- *Trinitarian and Christological criteria:* the Trinitarian and Christocentric character of the faith must always be emphasized: “The proclamation of the Gospel is to present Christ and everything else in reference to him” (DC 168-170).



- *Historical-salvific criterion:* “The economy of salvation has a historical character, since it is achieved over time. The Church, in transmitting the Christian message today, starting from her living awareness of this, constantly recalls the salvific events of the past by recounting them” (DC 171-173).
- *Criterion of the primacy of grace and beauty:* catechesis based on the Word of God will be “a catechesis of grace”, capable of showing “the beauty of the Gospel which resounded from the lips of Jesus for all” (DC 174-175).
- *Criterion of ecclesiality:* “when catechesis transmits the mystery of Christ, the faith of all the people of God throughout history resounds in his message” (DC 176).

By maintaining these criteria, *the various catechetical proposals*, adapted to the various situations and speakers, *will be able to show that the Word is a living force*, which pierces like a sharp sword (*Heb 4:12*) warms the heart (cf. *Lk 24:32*) and lights the path like a lamp. (cf. *Ps 119:105*). Therefore it is more important than ever to make every effort so that *catechesis refers to*

*the Word of God as its essential source.* The other sources of catechesis - the Magisterium, the liturgy, the witness of saints and martyrs, theology, Christian culture, beauty - are in reality “attributable to the Word of God, of which they are an expression” (DC 90- 109).

The process of renewal of catechesis will not be possible if not starting from a renewed willingness on the part of the ecclesial community to place itself “in a reverential listening to the Word of God” (DV 1), itself being “called to be the first to rediscover the Gospel that it proclaims: *the new proclamation of the Gospel asks the Church for a renewed listening to the Gospel*, together with her speakers” (DC 59). In the wake of this suggestion, it should be reiterated that those in the community who are chosen to actively exercise a service for the proclamation of the Gospel - ordained ministers, religious, lay people – should be the first to feel that they are invited to be nourished with the daily bread of the Word, so that the proclamation may blossom naturally from the wealth in their heart.

By the way, the new *Directory* recognizes that the “*ministry of catechesis* is a particularly significant form of ser-

*vices to the Word of God*, necessary for growth in faith and the edification of the Church (DC 110-113). The presence of many men and women catechists in the ordinary pastoral care of the Christian community therefore requires that adequate attention be given to their *formation*. In the formative dimension relating to the *being* of the catechist (DC 139-142), care should be taken so that the catechist grows as “a guardian of the memory of God”, accompanying him on his personal spiritual journey in light of the Word. The dimension of *knowledge* should not be neglected because knowledge matures first of all through familiarity and study of Sacred Scripture (DC 143-144).

Finally, in an effort to identify some traces of method that can help evangelizers find ways to proclaim the Word in current times, the *Directory* suggests the *way of narrative language*: “the ecclesial community becomes increasingly aware of the narrative identity of the same faith, as it testifies to Sacred Scripture in the great stories about the origins, the patriarchs and the chosen people, the story of Jesus narrated in the Gospels and the stories of the begin-

nings of the Church” (DC 207). In a cultural climate in which the new generations are exposed almost exclusively to narratives dictated by social media, biblical narration mediated by catechesis - or, better, a catechesis that makes narration one of its strong points – allows for “a fruitful interweaving between the story of Jesus, the faith of the Church and the life of those who tell it and listen to it” (DC 208).

The rediscovery of the biblical dimension of catechesis is, after all, animated by the desire to help the individual recipients to encounter in the pages of Sacred Scripture the One who is the living Word, a rock in the midst of the hardships of life upon which to build a house that remains firm.



The *Logo of the Sunday from the Word of God* is inspired by the gospel passage about the disciples of Emmaus (cf. *Lk 24:13-33*) and highlights the theme of the relationship between the travelers, expressed in looks, gestures and words. Jesus appears as the one who “came near and went with” humanity (*Lk 24:15*), “standing among them” (*Jn 1:14*). In him “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (*Gal 3:28*).

Walking among his own, he reinvigorates their steps, pointing to the horizons of evangelization, depicted 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 ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (*Jn 10: 3-4*).

His words are one with those contained in the scroll he holds in his hands: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals” (*Rev 5: 2*). If the two disciples are lost, in the face of the mysteries of history, they are immediately reassured: «Do not weep. See, 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*). “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” (*Lk 24:27*).

Familiarity with the *Word of God* arises from the relationship, from the search for the face of God in the Sacred pages. Scripture does not offer us concepts, but experiences; it does not immerse us only in a text, but also opens us to the encounter with the Word of life, “useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (*2 Tim 3:16-17*).

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

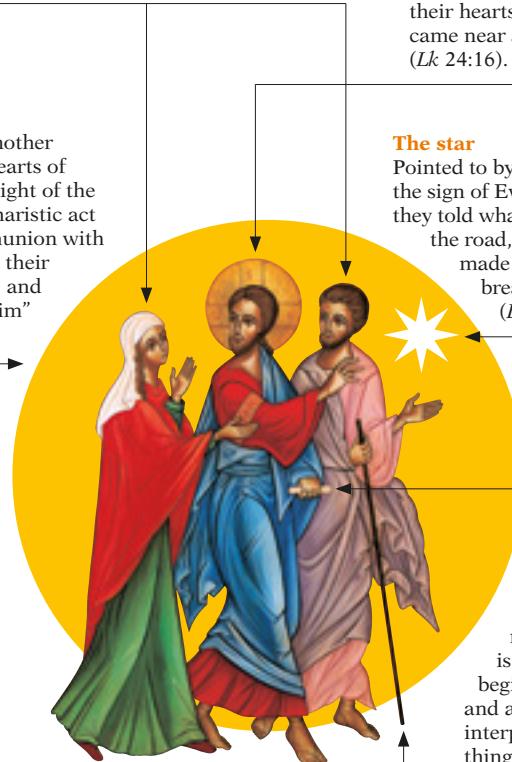


### The disciples

"Two of them were going to a village called Emmaus" (Lk 24:13). In the two disciples, Luke captures the face of all believers. Attention to the mutuality between masculine and feminine, which is found throughout the writings of Luke, has led some exegetes to see them as a couple, identifying the anonymous disciple as the wife of Cleopas.

### The light

As the sun sets, another light warms the hearts of the disciples: the light of the Word. In the Eucharistic act there is full communion with the Master: "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him" (Lk 24:31).



### The feet

The Risen One shares the steps of man and the power of his Word; he knows how to point them in the right direction because "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). For this, "that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem" (Lk 24: 33).

### The Risen One

With discretion, Jesus places himself on our path, "puts himself in the middle", living our history, our questions. He questions and listens to those who keep it in the silence of their hearts: "Jesus himself came near and went with them" (Lk 24:16).

### 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 had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24:35).

### The scroll

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

### The walking stick

Weak and insecure like all human certainties, it expresses the frailness of the disciples who "stood still, looking sad" (Lk 24:17). The Risen One gives them strength with the Word "sharper than any two-edged sword... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

The Logo intertwines two artistic-expressive fields: that of the iconographer Sister Marie-Paul Farran and that of the contemporary artist, Giordano Redaelli.

### Sister Marie-Paul Farran

She was born on November 10, 1930 in Cairo, Egypt. In 1955, after a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, deeply moved by her experience, she 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 meaning of each phase of the work, by illustrating it through the pages of the Bible and the experience of its protagonists. The "school" of Brother Coreta so enchanted Sister Marie-Paul that the writing of icons became her mission. She loved to testify: "Writing an icon immerses me in God and when I write God I feel so deeply immersed in Him that I have experiences that are difficult to express in words". Sister Marie-Paul wrote icons until May 8, 2019, the day on which God called her to contemplate the radiance of his face.

### Giordano Redaelli

After professional training at the Scuola Grafica Salesiana in Milan, Giordano specialized in graphic design and visual arts at the Scuola Superiore d'Arte del Castello. After his experience as a graphic layout designer and as art director of the weekly magazine *Sorrisi e Canzoni TV*, he founded the graphic studio "Giordano Redaelli" in Milan and the company "Methodus" in Giussano, working in the various fields of communication. In the publishing sector, he has collaborated with important publishing houses. He has designed several volumes of art for the St. Paul Editions among which the *New Gospel of Art* and the *Gospel Book of Mercy* for the Jubilee of Mercy stand out. The experience acquired in the graphic sector paved the way for an exploration in contemporary art: in recent years he has exhibited his works in various exhibitions in the most important European cities.