



January 22, 2023
Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
Sunday of the Word of God

*...Jesus began to preach and say, "Change your direction,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand." Matthew 4:17*



Dear Friends,

On 2019 Pope Francis established the "Sunday of the Word of God" on the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time. Today is devoted to the celebration, study, and the spread of the Word of God. Francis recalls the importance that was given to Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). He was responding to requests from around the world to dedicate a Sunday to the centrality of Scripture in the life of the Church. Francis says this is important as it builds relations among Christians *"since the Scriptures point out, for those who listen, the path to authentic and firm unity."*

We remind ourselves of the importance of God's Word. Each week we bring in procession the Book of the Gospels and enthrone it on the altar-table. Again, it is processed with candles and incense to the ambo/reading stand for the reading of the Gospel. As the Gospel book passes through our midst, we reverence the presence of Christ in the Scriptures by making a slight bow. It is Christ who speaks to us when the Scriptures are proclaimed.

In reading the Scriptures, it is important for us to rely on the Holy Spirit and the living Word found in the community of faith. Francis points out *"Without the work of the Spirit, there would always be a risk of remaining limited to the written text alone."* Francis warns, *"This would open the way to a fundamentalist reading, which needs to be avoided, lest we betray the inspired, dynamic and spiritual character of the sacred text."* It is the Holy Spirit that makes the Scriptures come alive as they are lived and handed on by the community of faith. We must never take God's word for granted because it is our nourishment as it leads us to a relationship with the risen Lord.

In the Sunday Liturgy we gather around two tables: the table of the Word of God, and the table of the Eucharistic Meal. Both tables give us nourishment and life. When we gather as church, we make visibly present in our assembly the body of Christ. Then as the Roman Missal tells us, *"When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel."* The homily is a critical part of the celebration of the word. Pastors are responsible for explaining the Sacred Scriptures and helping everyone apply it to our time and place.

Francis points out that there is an unbreakable bond between Scripture and the Eucharist. He quotes the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. On the way they at first don't recognize the risen Lord. Then he opens their minds to the meaning of the Scriptures. They invite the Lord to stay with them for the evening. While at table The Lord says the blessing and breaks the bread whereupon the two disciples recognize the Risen one. Francis points out that Scriptures reveal the goal of our sacramental celebrations: to believe in the saving death and resurrection of the Lord.

The Scriptures invite us to a new way of living. Formed by the word we renounce individualism and embark on the path to solidarity and communion. The challenge is to shape our lives around the word of God, rather than shape the word around us. We will know that we are being properly formed by the word when we grow in God's mercy.

The Bible is for everyone not just a privileged few. Pope Francis says the Bible belongs *"to those called to hear its message and to recognize themselves in its words."* Today, we invite you to create a place in your home for the reading of the Scriptures. We will be hand out a prayer ritual for you *"Enthroned the Bible in your Home."* A good way to read the bible is to read the readings for the Sunday Liturgy. Each week we post the readings for the next Sunday in the bulletin. Let us listen to the word and keep it!

Peace,

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church