



January 25, 2026

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time/Sunday of the Word of God

...Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17

Dear Friends,

In 2019 Pope Francis instituted the Sunday of the Word of God celebrated every year on the third Sunday of Ordinary Time. This celebration reminds us of the importance and value of Sacred Scripture for Christian life. In the Liturgy we gather around two tables that are integrally connected, the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist. Pope Francis wrote, "*As Christians we are one people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us... we need to develop a closer relationship with Sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, inflicted as we are by so many forms of blindness*" (*Aperuit illis* # 8). The Word of God is the living Christ who speaks to us.

When Jesus begins his preaching in Galilee he proclaims, 'Repent.' In Greek it is the word 'metanoia.' *Metanoia* means to turn around, to change, to move in a new direction. The first word out of the mouth of Jesus is *change!* Jesus calls us to be willing to change. But many of us are not willing to change. We are not willing to turn away from ourselves. Usually, we are not really in love with God. What we're in love with is our way of thinking, our way of explaining, our way of doing things. One of the ways we insulate ourselves from God, the truth, and grace, is to find some kind of conventional thinking and call it tradition.

All great religious traditions invite us on a journey of faith to keep changing. There is no other way for the human person can open up to what God asks of us. There's no way we can open up to all we have to learn and experience unless we are willing to let go of the idols of yesterday and the idols of today. We protect ourselves from the next word of God by clinging to the last word of God (usually from authority figures from our first half of life) and we build a whole system around it. Then we sit in the same place for the rest of our lives.

'Repent' or better 'metanoia' implies a complete turnaround. In the area of psychology, the term suggests a falling apart and a reconstitution of the personality. Pope John Paul II tells us that metanoia implies a Gospel-based revision of a person's underlying values and motivations. It is a change in attitude and action (*Ecclesia in America* #26). This is deeper than a mere sorrow for sin and a firm purpose of amendment. It is a radical transformation of the person.

Such a change of heart and mind does not come from a mere intellectual insight or an assertion of dogma. *Metanoia* is the result of an encounter with Jesus and the message he embodies: "*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" This is the core of Jesus' living and eventually the accusation that will get him executed. Kingdom does not refer to a spatial reality. The kingdom is better thought of as a verb rather than a noun. The kingdom is wherever healing, mercy, forgiveness, compassion and love are embodied and acted on. The kingdom is not about geography but the quality of our relationships.

Jesus awakens in us something that causes a *metanoia*. When that change of direction happens, there's nothing else that makes sense any longer. So, we follow him on the path of transformation.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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