

Dicastery for Evangelization
Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World

SUNDAY of the WORD of GOD

LITURGICAL-PASTORAL RESOURCE 2023





Heralds of the Word!

«We declare to you what we have seen» (1 Jn 1:3)

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Presentation

The First Letter that John writes to the Church is so imbued with the theme of love that one can hardly take their eyes off this focus. Agape is all-pervading because the sacred author must ultimately reveal its crowning glory: "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). By virtue of this prominence and primacy of love, we can understand why the beginning of the Letter opens with an invitation to proclaim. As the ancients used to say: *amor est diffusivum sui*; love by its very nature must spread, be communicated, shared because it is the prerequisite for communion. One can understand, therefore, why the upcoming *Sunday of the Word of God* is meant to stand in the light of the proclamation of what has been seen and heard.

The proclamation of what has been the subject of direct, firsthand experience is now shared so that communion that brings joy can become visible. To proclaim what has been seen is nothing other than to make known the person of Jesus and the mystery of his abiding presence among us. John immediately appeals to the senses, well aware that faith is not an abstraction but a personal, life-changing event. All that has been "heard," "seen," "contemplated," and "touched" is nothing other than "life." These are concepts so interconnected that it is impossible to divide them. We are before a united whole that fosters a comprehensive view of the mystery that especially in our day needs to be contemplated rather than to be dissected.

The very nature of evangelization inherent in this *Sunday of the Word of God* becomes more tangible every year, and the Johannine expression is aimed at strengthening the commitment of communities to place his living and effective Word at the heart of the Lord's Day. On Sunday, Christians do nothing other than celebrate the mystery of salvation. The "eternal life" that is celebrated, and for this reason proclaimed effectively, does nothing other than make present in the midst of the community and the world the person of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of the Father who asks to find a place in everyone's personal life. And yet, proclaiming the Risen Christ inevitably points to the future, to his final return when communion will be perfect.

Proclaiming what has been seen and heard, therefore, challenges the believer to forget all toil because the commitment of faith compels them to "hurry" to every person who, like the Ethiopian, holds the Sacred Scriptures in his hands but does not understand its meaning (cf. Acts 8:26-40). As noted, the proclamation of the Word of God demands the direct involvement of every believer. It is necessary that everyone be careful and alert to perceive the "manifestation" of this Word, because the meaning of one's life is at stake. The *Sunday of the Word of God* is a decisive step in the journey Pope Francis is asking the whole Church to make toward the Jubilee of 2025. Study and reflection on the various themes that the constitution *Dei Verbum* contains will be a rich source for learning more about the revelation of God's Word. In fact, the hope that flows from this Word challenges every community not only to proclaim the faith they have always had, but especially to communicate it with conviction so that it brings hope to those who hear and receive it with a simple heart.

Practical considerations

In order to actively live the *Sunday of the Word of God*, it is suggested that it be prepared ahead of time. It is important that preparations span from the spiritual level (personal and community prayer) to the material level (proper planning).

Spiritual preparation

Fostering an encounter with God in His Word demands appropriate spiritual preparation, asking for an openness of heart for those to whom the Word will be proclaimed. Accordingly, preparations for planning the event should start with individual and communal prayer.

Suggestions:

- A week before the *Sunday of the Word of God*, include an intention dedicated to this goal in the prayer of the faithful.
- Provide a time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament offered for the celebration of the *Sunday of the Word of God* for the community.

Practical preparation

For suitable planning, create a group of people who can coordinate the various pastoral initiatives. The tasks of this group could be:

- Plan the various activities (for different age groups)
- Choose other people for the practical carrying out of the program
- Estimate any expenses
- Prepare the materials needed
- Publicize information together with the clergy. Undoubtedly, a personal invitation is the most direct way to inform people; leaflets and brochures can also be used, and can be easily distributed to people and posted on parish bulletin boards; social media should also be used to spread the word about the activities
- Reach out to people in need (the sick, nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, charities...)

Future Prospects

We know well that hearing, sharing, living and proclaiming God's word is not the work of one day, but rather that of a lifetime. God's Word never ceases to work in our hearts, so it might be helpful to create a permanent group to promote various Bible initiatives throughout the year and provide an opportunity for ongoing formation for the faithful. For example:

- Weekly or monthly *Lectio divina*
- Bible group
- On-going *Lectio* of a biblical text
- Giving the Word in different settings
- Times for formation or cultural studies

THE WORD OF GOD IN COMMUNITY

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body.

(Dei Verbum, 21)

1. The Word received with the heart

«*Hear O Israel!*» (Deut 6:4)



Hear O Israel! In Hebrew *Shemà, Israèl* (Deut 6:4): this is the prime command, the heart of the Jewish

and Christian faith, that resounded on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:5; Deut. 4:1-10). The invisible God establishes a lively dialogue with the people and hears their cry (Ex. 3:7; Ps 34:18; 1 Jn 5:14) and makes himself heard by them. In his Message for the 56th World Day of Social Communications, Pope Francis says: "Among the five senses, the one favoured by God seems to be hearing, perhaps because it is less invasive, more discreet than sight, and therefore leaves the human being more free". In the Hebrew Bible in Deut 6:4, the final letters of the first word (*shemà*, "listen!") and the last (*'ehàd*, "only one") are written in larger type; when joined together, they form the term *'ed*, "witness": Israel is the people of the *Shemà*, witnesses - until death if necessary - of the one God. In Jewish tradition, the *Shemà* is the center point of prayer and is equivalent to taking upon oneself the "yoke" of the kingdom of Heaven; Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill the Torah



("Law," Mt 5:17), points to it as the first commandment: «The first is, "*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength*» (Mk 12:29-30).

In the OT, the covenant between God and his people is based on listening, gratuitous yes, but seeking acceptance and obedience (Ex 24:7; Deut 4:1, 32-36; 28:1-15). In biblical Hebrew, "to obey" is expressed with the same verb (*shama*) that also means "to listen." This shows the deep connection between listening and obeying: they are worth more than sacrifice (1 Sam 15:22; Jer 7:22-23). Therefore, Solomon asks God for the great gift of a "meek heart," literally a "listening heart" (in Hebrew *lev shomèa*, 1 Kings 3:9). The prophets and Wisdom constantly invite the people to listen to the Word and rebuke them for their refusal to accept it (cf., e.g., Is 6:9-11; 30:9; Jer 6:10; Bar 3:9; Zech 7:11-12; Pr 1; 8:32-34).

The two figures in the OT who have the closest experience of God are Moses and Elijah, both, not surprisingly, on Mount Sinai. Although they cannot see God, they experience the power of his Word. Moses hears it amid portentous signs and the trumpet blast (Ex. 19:16-19; 33:18-34, 8), while Elijah recognizes it in the «sound of sheer silence» (1Kings 19:12-12) or, as the Hebrew literally reads, in a «voice of subtle silence». On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah stand beside Jesus as a voice from heaven proclaims: «This is my Son, the Beloved; *listen to him!*» (Mk 9:7; cf. Mt 17:5; Lk 9:35; Dt 18:15-

19). Christ thus fulfills the word of the *Shemà*: He is the eternal and powerful *Lògos* of God, and at the same time the Voice of silence manifested in the darkness of the Cross, which nevertheless is the supreme revelation of God's eloquence and glory.



Receiving the Word, however, is impossible without grace (Jn 8:47; 10:27). Therefore, God opens his servant's ear (Is 50:5) and in the Messianic age restores hearing to the deaf (Is 29:18; 35:5; Mk 7:31-37). Jesus is the beloved Son whom the Father hears (Jn 11:42) and sends into the world to hear him: he who hears his words and puts them into practice is «like a wise man who built his house on rock» (Mt 7:24). Hearing Christ, then, leads to eternal life (Mk 4:20; Jn 5:24-25; Jas. 1:22-25) and happiness (Lk 11:28; Rev 1:3), but rejecting Him leads to ruin (Jn 8:43-47; Acts 7:51-57; 28:25-28). Thus, we can understand why the parable of the sower (Mt 13:1-23 and par.), all based on the *Shemà*, is so basic for Jesus: without it the other parables cannot be understood (Mk 4:13), since it is centred on *how* to listen (Lk 8:18). In this sense, Mary of Bethany chooses the «better part», which is to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his Word, since «there is need of only one thing» (Lk 10:42), an expression which from the Greek can also be translated, «*only one* is needed», which is still a reference to the *Shemà*, that is, to the command to listen to the one Bridegroom, Christ.

The faith that grants salvation comes from listening to the *kèrygma* (Rom 10:14-17; Acts 15:7) - the proclamation of Christ and his paschal mystery - sealed in the sacraments, *first and foremost* Baptism. The Church is, therefore, a people constantly listening to the divine Word:

Feed there that you may feed in safety. Whatever you hear from that source, you should savor. Whatever is foreign to it, reject. Hear the voice of the shepherd, lest

you wander about in the mist. Gather at the mountains of Holy Scripture. There, are the things that will delight your hearts; there you will find nothing poisonous, nothing hostile; there the pastures are most plentiful. (Augustine, *Sermon 46,24*).

We are always called upon to search Scripture (Jn 5:39), which has been entrusted to us to be not only read and meditated upon personally, but especially proclaimed and celebrated especially in the liturgical assembly. In fact, it "comes alive" in an assembly that listens to it, celebrates it and embodies it, by the power of the Holy Spirit, since in the liturgy "God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His gospel" (SC 33). Thus, the Church-Bride, a community perpetually listening to her Bridegroom, can proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that they too may hear and be saved (Acts 28:28; 1 Jn 1:1-3; Rev 2:7).

Even today, God still speaks to man: listening to his voice in the present-day liturgy and history is the only way not to harden one's heart (Ps 95:8). The Blessed Virgin Mary did just this: accepting the seed of the "*kèrygmā*", the angel's announcement, she conceived in her womb the greatest of all fruit, Christ; treasuring these Words (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), she fulfills the ark of the covenant that contained the Ten Commandments (Deut 10:1-5; Heb 9:4) and thus becomes a new ark of the covenant, an icon of every believer who welcomes the Word into his or her heart.

2. Biblical Adoration

«We declare to you what we have seen» (1Jn 1: 3)

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

This text is a proposal that should be later concretized and adapted to local traditions.

Having gathered the faithful and begun a song, the minister goes to the Tabernacle, takes the Blessed Sacrament and places it in the monstrance. Then, kneeling, he incenses the Blessed Sacrament.

C./ Lord, we contemplate Your real presence in this Blessed Sacrament and thank You for calling us to be before You. We gather together trusting in You and in Your Word. Prepare our minds and hearts to receive the graces You have prepared for us at this time. Make us aware at all times that we are before You and Your infinite love. Open our minds and wills to receive Your Word and proclaim it with our lives.

C./ All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment Thine

R./ Most Holy and Blessed Sacrament.

«And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth». (Jn 1:14)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...



C./ All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment Thine

R./ Most Holy and Blessed Sacrament.

«They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”». (Lk 24:32)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...

C./ All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment Thine

R./ Most Holy and Blessed Sacrament.

«Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age». (Mt 28:19-20)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...

L./ Let us listen and embrace the Word of God, always alive and effective. Let it resonate within us and enlighten our lives.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

«And from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him”».

Alleluia.

Let us listen to the Word of the Lord from the Gospel according to Luke (24:35-48)

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, «Peace be with you». They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, «Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, «Have you anything here to eat?». They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, «These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled». Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things».

Guided reflection

L./ As part of the *Sunday of the Word of God*, we celebrate this time of adoration, which this year is inspired by the text, «*We proclaim to you what we have seen*» (1 Jn 1:3). Before Jesus in the Eucharist let us reflect:

1. How many of Jesus' words and deeds were the Apostles able to hear and see! Many of these have been recorded in the Gospels, where we can contemplate Jesus through his Word. Jesus continues to speak to us and continues to act in our lives.
2. If the apostles were able to see and hear Jesus, it is because He Himself allowed Himself to be seen and heard, that is, He revealed Himself and continues to do so to us in our time.
3. Out of love for us, Jesus entered our material world, became incarnate so that we can see, touch, hear, feel and follow him.
4. «He went around doing good and healing all» He passed through this world and fulfilled it by doing and proclaiming good. Everything in Him is a means of expressing His love.
5. Jesus became incarnate and so, with his body, he saw, heard, spoke, felt.... His gaze is deep and able to embrace and know the present, the history and the desires of those "being gazed upon." He looks with compassion, mercy, without indifference: it would not be possible for Him to see someone suffering and turn away. His speech is always with love and transforming authority: «say but a word» as the Roman centurion used to say. Just one! He had a word for Levi at that table; one for Zacchaeus on that Sycamore; one for Peter, James and John by the sea; one for Mary outside the tomb... He has one for us as well. His being present: Jesus is with us, and he does so by giving himself.

Prayerful silence

Song

Community prayers

L./ You who were contemplated by the shepherds and magi in Bethlehem...

R./ Let me discover you in my life, Lord. (cf. Mt 2:11)

L./ You who showed Your glory on Tabor...

R./ Let me enjoy the joys of each day, Lord. (cf. Mt 17:1f)

L./ You who called Your disciples to the shore of the lake...

R./ Let me also hear your call, Lord. (cf. Mt 4:18-22)

L./ You who saw the resourcefulness of Zacchaeus ...

R./ Let me offer you my efforts, Lord. (cf. Lk 19:1f)

L./ You who by touching the deaf showed them your closeness....

R./ Let me receive your Word. (cf. Mk 7:33)

L./ You who changed the whole perspective of Matthew's life ...

R./ Fill my life with meaning, Lord. (cf. Mt 9:9-13)

L./ You who, turning toward Lazarus, brought him back to life....

R./ Encourage my fervour and desire for holiness, Lord. (Cf. Jn 11:1f)

L./ You who, explaining the scriptures to your disciples along the way, turned their sadness into joy...

R./ Enkindle in us a love for your Word and the surety of your presence. (cf. Lk 24:13-35)

Song

Personal prayer

At this time, a printed biblical quotation could be given to the faithful to encourage personal prayer. This could be accompanied by sacred instrumental music.

Suggestions for biblical citations:

- «For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage» (Mt 2:2). What is "the star" that made me come to adore him?
- «On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother...» (Mt 2:11). When have I felt that the Mother brought me to her Son?
- «Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down..."» (Lk 19:5). In what situations do I feel that the Lord calls me by name and asks me to convert?
- «He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"» (Mk 5:41). From what situation do I need the Lord to "lift me up"?
- «A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink"» (Jn 4:7). Lord, you asked for water from her: what are you asking of me?
- «Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people» (Mk 6:41). What can I share with others?
- «Jesus came walking toward them on the sea...» (Mk 14:25). In what troubled times have I felt that the Lord has come to me?
- «The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me"» (1 Cor 11:23f). How is my participation in the holy sacrifice? Do I really accept the Holy Eucharist as His Body and Blood?
- «When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes» (Jn 9:6). With what concrete signs has Jesus touched my life?
- «Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe"» (Jn 20:27). At what times do I come to know that God has given me signs of His love and nearness to strengthen my faith?

Our Father

C./ We thank you Lord because you are always near us, especially in the Eucharist and in your Word. At all times we want to turn to You, Word of Eternal Life, to welcome You with faith and simplicity, to share You with others with enthusiasm, to live Your Word in daily life and to proclaim You with courage. With the confidence of sons and daughters and in your own words we dare to say, *Our Father...*

Benediction

At the end of adoration, the priest or deacon goes to the altar; *Tantum ergo* or another appropriate hymn is sung. Meanwhile, kneeling, the minister incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Then he rises and says:

Let us pray
Lord Jesus Christ,
you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death.
May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood
help us to experience the salvation you won for us
and the peace of the kingdom where you live
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

R./ Amen.

Having said the prayer, the priest or deacon puts on the white humeral veil, takes the monstrance or pyx and makes the sign of the cross over the people with the Blessed Sacrament, without saying anything.

Acclamations

If deemed fitting, according to local custom, the Divine Praises may be said after the Eucharistic blessing:

Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints.

Reposition

When the blessing is over, the priest or deacon who gave the blessing, or another priest or deacon, places the Blessed Sacrament back in the tabernacle and genuflects.

3. Pastoral proposals

The following are a series of suggestions for living the *Sunday of the Word of God* in community.

Enthronement of the Word during Mass

Some liturgical suggestions for the Celebration of the Mass are proposed, however, and at the discretion of the local bishop and the pastor, other gestures may be introduced that emphasize the importance of the Word of God in the celebrating community – in accordance with the current liturgical directions regarding the celebration of the Eucharist.

It is recommended that the *Rite of Enthronement* take place at least once, during the most solemn Eucharistic celebration on the *Sunday of the Word of God*.

Next to the altar, or at the lectern stand, 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.

To enhance the *Sunday of the Word of God*, the short introductory remarks proposed could be read at the beginning of the Eucharist, before each reading and at the end of Mass.

Initial introductory remark (before the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration)

Today we celebrate the *Sunday of the Word of God*, a pastoral initiative desired by Pope Francis in 2019. It is a Sunday "to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God" (*Aperuit Illis*, 3). Let us open our minds and hearts to welcome this Word, «Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path» (cf. Ps 119,105).

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.

PENITENTIAL ACT

After the initial greeting the penitential act is introduced with these or similar words:

Today the Church is celebrating the *Sunday of the Word of God*. Let us open our hearts to the presence of God, who through his Word, wants to reveal himself and dwell in our lives.

In order for us to welcome his presence during this celebration, let us acknowledge that we are sinners and confidently invoke God's mercy.

The penitential act follows, which could be the following:

C. Lord, you are the Word of God made flesh, *Kyrie eleison*

R. *Kyrie eleison*

C. Christ, you restore sight to the blind by the power of your word, *Christe eleison*

R. Christe eleison

C. Lord, you free our lives from sin, Kyrie eleison

R. Kyrie eleison

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.

Introductory remark before the first reading

The prophet Isaiah encourages the people of Israel, who had suffered in various ways, by foretelling a better future: «The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light» (Is 9:2). Jesus is that Light that illuminates us in a special way through His Word. God's Word in this way guides us and fills us with hope.

Introductory remark before the second reading

St. Paul addresses the Corinthians exhorting them to overcome their divisions. The Word of God, proclaimed in the Apostle's letter, also calls us to unity of faith in Christ. We are God's children gathered to hear and follow his Good News.

Introductory remark before the Gospel

Matthew situates the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, following Isaiah's prophecy about this region, as we heard in the first reading. Jesus is presented as the Light who enlightens the world by announcing conversion and choosing his first disciples.

ENTHRONEMENT OF THE WORD OF GOD

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, opened and incensed.

A commentator explains the gesture with these or similar words:

The book containing the Word of God is solemnly carried and placed on the throne. It is a symbolic gesture in which we not only raise the Holy Scripture in the midst of our praying community, but it also expresses our willingness to put it first in our lives. Thus, the Word of God becomes the beacon of our lives that illuminates our decisions and inspires our actions according to God's will.

The homily and the Mass follow as usual.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

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

C. Dear brothers and sisters, gathered together to celebrate the mysteries of our redemption, we beseech Almighty God, that through his Word, our path to holiness may be renewed.

L. Let us pray together and say, *Make us, O Lord, heralds of your Word!*

1. For the Pope, bishops and priests, that they may love the Word of God more and more each day and joyfully share it in their deep meditation with the people entrusted to them. We call upon you.
2. For the readers and catechists who will receive their ministry today, that as they deepen their understanding of the Word of God each day, they may be configured with it and convey it by the witness of their lives. We call upon you.
3. For parents so that, enlightened and strengthened by God's Word, they may have the wisdom to guide their children, passing on the faith to them. We call upon you.
4. For the entire Christian community listening to God gathered around his Word, that it may grow in unity and bear authentic witness to God's love. We call upon you.
5. That our hearts may be on fire as we listen to the Scriptures and thus return to our daily lives with joy as we proclaim and practice what Jesus asks of us. We call upon you.
6. For each of us that we may open our hearts to the Word of God and thus work together every day to build peace. We call upon you.
- 7.

C. Gracious Father, hear these prayers which we offer to you in faith through your Son, the Word made flesh, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen

SOLEMN BENEDICTION

The priest extends his hands and says:

C. May God, who has revealed his truth and charity in Christ,
make you apostles of the gospel
and witnesses of his love in the world.

R. Amen.

C. May the Lord Jesus, who promised his Church
to be present until the end of the ages,
guide your steps and strengthen your words.

R. Amen.

C. May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you,
that as you walk the streets of the world
you may evangelize the poor and heal the contrite of heart.

R. Amen.

Bless all present saying:

C. And upon all you here present,
may Almighty God bless you
the Father and the Son + and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Final Introductory remark

Grateful to the Lord for allowing us to celebrate the *Sunday of the Word of God*, we return to our daily lives with joy, witnessing and proclaiming what we have received.



In addition to Enthroning the Word at Holy Mass, the following pastoral initiatives could be carried out at the community level:

Take the Bible to Church

Ask ahead of time that the faithful bring a Bible to church on the *Sunday of the Word of God* and use it in the liturgy of the Word in the Eucharist.

At the end of Mass or later days in the week, small groups could be formed to share their reflection on the Gospel.

Bookmarker

Bookmarkers with biblical quotations could be handed out so that God's Word is present in their readings.

Giving out Biblical quotations

Another suggestion is to write several biblical quotations (just the abbreviation) on a small piece of paper that can be rolled up; at the end of Mass, they can be given to the faithful to read at home and share as a family.

Ongoing Reading

During the week of the *Sunday of the Word of God*, or on certain selected days, we could commit to ongoing public reading of the Gospel in Church.

Biblical exhibits

Biblical exhibits could be set up, with pictures, information, historical data and motivation to continue to delve into Scripture.

THE WORD OF GOD IN THE FAMILY

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... 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.

(Verbum Domini, 85)

1. The Word shared within the family

«*Let your house be a Church*» (J. Chrysostom)

*The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever. (Is 40:8)*

“*Let your house be a Church*”. These words of St. John Chrysostom emphasize the importance of the family as a domestic Church, where the Word of God is present to accompany, proclaim and witness to the ongoing encounter with the Lord, renewing hope and pointing to the nature and mission of the Church.

In Rio de Janeiro in 1997, Pope John Paul II recalled that the family «is the sanctuary of life, God's gift, where it is protected from the many attacks to which it is exposed» by those who seek to destroy its unity and stability, and make the culture an increasingly de-Christianized environment.

Today we say that our world, society and family is in crisis because so many unstable ways of living have been contrived that, while not denying God, He just seems to be disregarded entirely. Long gone are those days, when we talked about the family consisting



of mother, father and children; and it seems like utopia to nurture the hope of strengthening Christian families where there is no lack of bread, shelter and education; where faith and the Word are shared lovingly among its members. The family suffers from the strain of the prevailing culture, in which economics is placed at the centre of life, casting aside solidarity and fraternity, which end up being irrelevant. What prevails are separations, divorces, absences, the eclipse of the father figure, single mothers, abandoned children, and lately, new notions as to the concept of family and the practice of abortion that manifest little respect for human life.

Certainly, families do not always provide an environment that fosters affection, strength in times of crisis, nor a place for the love and spread of God's Word; added to this are the profound social and technological changes that affect the state of the family and threaten to make it disappear.

In order to grow in an authentically human way, God must be present in the

family; as a domestic church, one learns to be father, mother, son, brother... to understand what it means to be part of the mystical body of Christ, to grow strong, respecting generational bonds and, as a community of faith, fostering prayer among members, regular participation in the sacraments, reading the Bible and Christian traditions. We know that it is not easy to spread the faith and love of the Word in the family because it is a process that never ends (cf. Rom 12:18).

The Word has a potential that we cannot predict. The Gospel speaks of a seed that, once sown, grows by itself, even when the sower is asleep (cf. Mk 4:26-29). The family must accept the freedom of the Word, which is effective in its own way, and in very different ways, which often exceed our expectations and shatter our preconceived plans.

The best model we can follow to make the Word of God the apex of family life is to imitate the family of Nazareth. It is not about having a distorted picture of the Holy Family like thinking about an "ideal image": St. Joseph with a beard, in his carpenter's workshop or with a flowering lily in his hand; the beautiful Virgin Mary, innocent and dedicated to her work, and the child learning his father's trade. Everything seems idealistic, but Jesus' family, like ours, had its own struggles.

Just as soon as they got engaged, Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant before they had lived together (cf. Mt 1:18); resolving this problem was not easy; it involved dialogue, discernment and prayer. Then, Jesus is born in Bethlehem; the couple faces difficulties in traveling and finding housing. They also undergo political persecution and have to flee to a foreign country (cf. Mt 2:13-15).

Still, they cannot return to Bethlehem, but to a lost and unknown town in Galilee. Later they take the child to the temple and listen to a man of God speak of his fate (cf. Lk 2:35). Later Jesus' parents lose him for three days (cf. Lk 2:41-51). So, we can imagine a family like our own. The Gospel gives us a guideline: the ideal family does not exist, but a family that develops as a domestic church is one that listens, welcomes and lives the Word of God; building up values that foster a personal encounter with Jesus, claiming with the apostles: *«we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard»* (Acts 4:20).

What challenges are we facing? Family, sexuality and marriage are increasingly seen as personal achievements, and the first to be affected are the children who should be provided with a home that ensures their physical, spiritual and emotional growth. If Jesus used parables to reach people, family life could be a great call: to be a parable, to the charism of encounter, to be an evangelical internet, and to form spiritual networks together with Jesus Christ, so that *«the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere»* (2 Thess 3:1).

The pandemic has brought about some positive changes, such as a return to personal relationships and the family coming together for liturgy, recitation of the rosary, *lectio* or the chaplet of mercy; the experience of powerful times as a new or renewed encounter with the Word; reflections on the Bible through digital means, appreciating every moment and the value of a hug and an *"I love you"* from a distance. At such a particular time as this, innovative proposals for evangelization have sprung up with cyber media initiatives, emphasizing a greater role for the family. Ratifying a long-standing teaching,

Pope Benedict XVI said: "*the Christian faith is not a Book religion: Christianity is the religion of the Word of God*".

The first story of salvation begins with the family of Adam and Eve, and the second with the family of Mary, which completes the story of Israel. With Her we understand that the family is, and must be, Christocentric. St. Joseph is a magnificent example of a man, husband and father, whose healthy fatherhood was the basis of Jesus' spiritual experience, in relation to Abbà.

Reading the signs of the times today in the light of God's Word could make the home a stronger domestic church, one that touches deep emotional and vital wellsprings, one that inspires all members of the household to live their relationship with God in a new way, to practice silence, to love, to obey, to welcome and to work. It is essential that the revealed Word be fruitful in the family. As reality changes, God's revelation is revealing a new face of God: while retaining permanent features - the core of Christian identity- at the same time, it is being transformed to offer responses to new family situations.

Recalling Rubén Darío's verses, "*there are always futures in the eternal womb*," we are living a true *kairós*, a decisive historical moment, with immense possibilities for defining mission, walking paths of fraternity as a family. We are the salt of the earth and glorify the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt 5:13-16). It is a time of more personal conviction, greater fervour and more existential reference to Jesus.

In conclusion, the following are some guidelines for sharing the Word in the family:

- That the family be the central focus of the pastoral process of evangelizing action in our parishes, promoting the importance of family catechesis by participating in courses of Christian initiation, which celebrate the faith in the home and in the community.
- Promote the mission and identity of the family in the Church and in society.
- Participate in pro-life, pro-marriage and pro-family public affairs.
- Strengthen Sunday in the family, the Lord's Day as a time of agape and prayer.

The maturity of a family can be recognized by how they live the Spirit of God in faith and in integrity to daily commitments, and in simple adherence to the Word of God.

2. Experience of passing on the Word of God to children

I am Alessandro Dariva. I realize that no age is better than another for a child to receive God's word. We have 5 children, including one in heaven, ranging from 1 to 7 years of age, and they themselves sometimes give us the occasions to talk to them about the gospel. For instance, already when they are quite young, they are deeply intrigued by the crucifix. This image strikes their curiosity, prompting them to ask questions such as "who is he?" or the even more difficult "why did he die?".

Images then, as well as later signs, help us to "sow" God's word: the prayers in the evening or before meals, the blessing before bedtime, etc... Sunday then, is a bit like harvest day. In the morning after breakfast, we all gather around a small table we set up with the Bible in the centre, a small crucifix and an Easter candle. So, we pray morning prayers, singing the psalms together with the guitar and accompanied by various little instruments that the children choose themselves. It is a little celebration. After this we open a gospel, explaining to them that the word we are about to hear is like a precious gift and therefore they need to listen. After asking them what they heard and what they liked, we move on to the explanation. This is a time to remind them, but especially ourselves, that God's word is alive and speaks through the happenings of our lives, no matter how big or small. The Word always produces fruit, and sharing this fruit completes the family's prayer of praise.

We parents are the first image of God for a child. So, we always ask the Lord to make us holy, merciful to each other and to them, because we know that the Word must always be accompanied by the signs of faith, otherwise it is vain and incomplete. And children know this better than anyone, since they watch what we do, more than what we tell them as parents. So, ultimately, passing on God's word is a grace, because it surpasses our shortcomings and, although we are not fully worthy of it, it enables us to see its fruit and bless the Lord.

3. Pastoral Proposals

A privileged place for passing on and receiving faith is one's family, where from generation to generation one shares experientially what one has received, that is, the beliefs and sureties that flow from one's experience. That is why it is essential to strengthen and not lose this proclamation of faith in the family.

Celebration of handing over the Word to the children

It is a suggestion that aims at emphasizing the responsibility of parents to pass on the faith and for the personal encounter of their children with Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, it shows the importance of receiving the Word of God by both parents and children, because the Word cannot be passed on if it has not first been received.

On this occasion, it would be good if parents could prepare a Bible passage that they would like to read together with their children, a passage that corresponds to their family situation and the state of their faith. Otherwise, the passage below could be used.

As a special sign of the handing over, it is suggested that parents choose a biblical passage, write it down (perhaps with a brief written reason or said verbally during the handing over), seal it in an envelope (or print it on a colourful card, a rolled-up card or done in other ways), and hand it to their children at the end of the prayer.

The handing over of the Word could be done in this way:

During the Sunday of the Word of God, everyone at home gathers around the table, where a crucifix, an icon of Our Lady, a candle and the Bible are placed.

A family member lights the candle and says:

- The light of Christ

All respond

- Thanks be to God

Next, one of the parents introduces the prayer to the Holy Spirit. He or she may do so with these words, or with others as deemed more appropriate:

For I handed on to you what I in turn had received – these words written by the Apostle Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians (15:3) remind us of a simple truth: you can only give to others what you have received. Let us be open and ready to receive the Word of God and to pass it on among ourselves, in our families, and later to those we meet in our daily lives.

Let us now ask the Holy Spirit to accompany us with his light during this time.

The following prayer is recited (it can be divided and recited by several people as well):

Come, Holy Spirit, and enlighten my steps with your light.

Come, Holy Spirit, and enable me to be totally open to your inspirations.

Come, Holy Spirit, and give me strength that I may proclaim and witness your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit, and bestow upon me the love and understanding of God's Word.

Come, Holy Spirit, and open my ears that I may hear you.

Come, Holy Spirit, and give me the will power to follow and obey you.

Come, Holy Spirit, and renew me with your Word that I may be a new creature.

Come, Holy Spirit, and enkindle in me the fire of your love so that I may love all people, especially the poor and the needy.

A family member takes the Bible, opens it, and begins to read the following passage from the Gospel of Luke 8:4-15 The parable of the Sower.

Listen to the word of the Lord from the Gospel according to Luke

When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: «A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.» As he said this, he called out, «Let anyone with ears to hear listen!»

Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said,

«To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that 'looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand.'

«Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.»

All family members kiss the Book of Holy Scripture.

This is followed by a moment of silence, during which everyone meditates and prays on the passage just heard.

Then those present, starting with the parents, can share their reflections on the Word of God they have just heard. To facilitate sharing, the following questions are suggested:

- What part of the passage struck/pleased me the most and why?
- With what part/image of the biblical account do I identify?
- What behaviour or situation caught my attention?
- How did I feel during the reading? What emotions and when?
- Does this passage relate to my life in some way?
- Am I inspired by the words I heard?

If the moment of sharing is omitted, the following commentary can be read:

This parable speaks to each of us today, just as it spoke to those who listened to Jesus 2,000 years ago. It reminds us that we are the soil where the Lord tirelessly sows the seed of his Word and of his love. How do we receive it? And we can ask ourselves: how is our heart? Which soil does it resemble: that of the path, the rocks, the thorns? It is up to us to become good soil with neither thorns nor stones, but tilled and cultivated with care, so it may bear good fruit for us and for our brothers and sisters.

And it will do us good not to forget that we too are sowers. God sows good seed, and here too we can also ask ourselves: which type of seed comes out of our heart and our mouth? Our words can do much good and also much harm; they can heal and they can wound; they can encourage and they can dishearten. Remember: what counts is not what goes in but what comes out of the mouth and of the heart.

POPE FRANCIS, *Angelus*, July 13, 2014

If parents would like to use a different passage that they think is more suitable for their family needs, they can begin their reflections with the following questions:

- Why did we choose this particular passage?
- Why is this passage important for us?
- What words/phrases do we especially want to share with you and why?

After the comments everyone recites the Lord's Prayer together:

- Our Father who art in Heaven...

When the prayer is over, parents can hand each of their sons and daughters the envelope with the Bible phrase they have chosen, explaining why with these or similar words:

- As a parent/parents, I thought/we thought of choosing this phrase from the Bible for you. May God's Word light your way, your thoughts and your heart.

After giving the Bible phrase, the person who lit the candle takes the Bible and makes the sign of the cross, blessing the whole family with the Sacred Scriptures, saying the following words:

- May God's blessing descend upon us and remain with us forever.

The candle is blown out, saying:

- Remain with us, Lord, now and all the days of our lives. Amen



Lectio Divina in the family (Mt 4:12-23)

Introduction

«Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures...» (Lk 24:45). This is the certainty that sustains anyone who approaches Scriptures to taste the Word contained in it. The interweaving of God's Word and human words marks and directs the lives of men and women eager to know God in Christ Jesus the *Word made flesh*.

«The sweetness of God's word leads us to share it with all those whom we encounter in this life and to proclaim the sure hope that it contains (cf. 1 Pet 3:15-16). [...] God's word has the power to open our eyes [...] and to embark on a new path of sharing and solidarity» (*Aperuit illis*, 12,13). In this melody marked by listening and dialogue, the dynamism of the Word of God continues its journey in the life of each person and in communities, among human words and within history, urging an active and co-responsible participation of everyone in the life and mission of that *Church that goes forth* so much desired by Pope Francis. With this common feeling, let us encounter Jesus the Christ *dabar* of God, let us be grasped by a Word that does what it says, heals, urges, liberates and consoles, a Word of Love, a Love that has preceded us and always precedes us and makes us new creatures, day after day.

Invoking the light of the Holy Spirit, let us open chapter 4 of Matthew's gospel to verses 12-23.

Context (vv. 12-16)

The passage opens with a geographical notation that leads the reader to follow Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum in the delicate transition between his ministry that is about to begin and that of the Baptist who preceded him. In the background is the *fulfilment* prophesied by Isaiah (Is 8:23-9:1) and which the evangelist Matthew refers to as a sealing of the long-awaited light. The reference is to the proclamation of deliverance addressed to the northern regions under Assyrian rule. The coming of Jesus is that long-awaited light according to God's plan already foretold in the Old Testament that transcends geopolitical boundaries and offers itself to everyone: to Israel and to the whole world.

This is valuable information laden with meaning that enables the reader to enter into the Mystery of the *Kingdom that was brought forth* in the messianic work of Jesus of Nazareth, in his preaching and activity of proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God (Mt 4:23//Mk 1:14-15; cf. Mt 24:14; 26:13) at work among the people. Moreover, it all begins in a surprising way: not according to human logic, not from the religious centre *par excellence* of Judaism, Jerusalem, but from a remote and multi-ethnic region, usually disdained and considered defiled by paganism: the *Galilee of the Gentiles* where Jesus' mission is situated in continuity with the preaching of the Baptist (Mt. 3:2) and the *kerygma* is unleashed.

«Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near» (v. 17): core of Jesus' message

Among the cities of Galilee, Capernaum is a theological site and the centre of Jesus' ministry, called "his homeland" (Mk 2:1 and Mt 9:1). Interestingly, Peter had a house there

(Mk 1:29; 2:2; cf. Mt 8:14; Lk 4:38). Capernaum, becomes the centre of Jesus' preaching from which the summons to conversion with all its saving power emanates. The Word made flesh is that kingdom that drew near, made inroads into history, allowed itself to be touched, embraced, experienced with gestures and words of unprecedented novelty so that through the Son the *Father could be seen* (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus Kyrios, the Christ, is the Kingdom that can already be experienced here and points to the Kingdom not of this world (cf. Jn 18:36) where *reigning means serving and loving*, where *the last become first* (Mt 19:30); where the greatest is the one who serves (cf. Lk 22:24-27); where a woman is healed for touching the fringe of his cloak (Lk. 8:43-48) and where others have followed him from beginning to end (cf. Lk. 8:1-3); where robes are laid down, a towel is wrapped around and feet are washed (cf. Jn 13:1ff); where out of Love he lets himself be nailed to the wood of a cross in the certainty that he will flourish on Easter morning. Here is the programmatic message of Jesus living in the Church.

Convert! It is the invitation to *change*, to make a turn toward the way that leads to salvation. It is the invitation to believe in the Kingdom that has drawn near to manifest the sovereignty of God's Love in the very person of Jesus the Lord -- in his gestures and words full of unseen love -- to sinful, wounded, sick, discriminated, hopeless humanity. It is about welcoming the Salvation that knocks to enter the home of those who are ready and open to receive it (Lk 19:9). There is a chance, there is always a chance to get back on the path of life.

Calling of the first disciples (vv. 18-22)

In the setting of the lake, the background is that of ordinary everyday life: these are fishermen intent on their work amidst nets, boats and fish. It all begins with a glance. Peter and Andrew are the first to be met by those eyes (Jesus') that communicated before any words were the spoken. Then, in a similar way, he turns to two other brothers, James and John, and invites them to follow him.

What does Jesus do

He sees: it is not a mere looking as much as it is a laying of eyes on the disciple to indicate his choice and election. The verb *oraō*, referring to Jesus, to aorist (*εἶδεν*) is usually used in the call to follow. It should first be noted that the verb *oraō* used by Matthew is repeated twice (vv. 18,21) and designates a seeing *beyond and above*: that of faith, when referring to believers; that of coming into possession with authority when referring to Jesus.

He says to them: it is only in the second instance that Jesus speaks to them, a lively, authoritative, meaningful word that carries an explicit invitation/command: «Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of people». What should be emphasized here is Jesus' centrality and his power to change and give meaning to life. He, the *Kyrios*, has the power to turn ordinary fishermen into disciples.

He called them: four brothers are called, two by two, as if to sketch from the outset that sending out on mission (Mk 6:7) along the roads, in the villages and throughout the world. They are caught up within the twists and turns of the daily web of life, during the normal

course of a working day of fishing. While the former *were casting their nets into the sea*, the latter, *together with Zebedee their father, were repairing their nets*.



What do the disciples do

The vocabulary and essence of the two scenes of calling are similar (vv. 20,22). Between the quickness of the response, in a crescendo from leaving nets (work) and then, in addition, boat and father (one's roots and social identity), a demanding and profound following takes shape which is the way of the Master. It is a following in which its essential elements are put into motion: *leaving and following*. It is a mission that rests on fundamental coordinates: sharing/communion with the Lord Jesus and going out to the world to *engage in another kind of fishing*: witnessing to the point of giving one's life.

Jesus' activity (v. 23)

Through four verbs, verse 23 forms a kind of concluding summary of the passage. In a single verse, Jesus' entire activity of is summarized: *traveling, teaching, proclaiming, healing*. It is Jesus who goes (*traversing*) in search of men and women on the roads of Palestine to bring them salvation. He taught in synagogues starting with the *Torah* and the prophets. He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom: the *kerygma*, the core of his message; Jesus healed and delivered people from evil. This is a prelude to what will be Matthew's final page with its baptismal formula (Mt 28:18-20) that recalls the theological significance of Galilee where it all began, where Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom and wrought healings;

where he had been accepted and rejected (Mt 11:20-24; 13:53-58), and from where boundaries will disappear, and other and numerous ways will open with one certainty: «Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [...]. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age» (Mt 28: 19-20).

A light for us

The Church, which is the totality of those called, has taken shape from the four skilled fishermen encountered in this passage, of whom Jesus, through the teaching of "being with Him," makes them credible witnesses, passionate proclaimers, humble messengers, aware of being *oligopistoi* (*you of little faith*) (Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17; 20; Lk 12:28). In the extensive use of this word in his gospel, the evangelist Matthew, highlights *deficiency and poverty of faith* and *trust* of the disciples in their sometimes arduous journey with Jesus. A metaphor for the lives of believers who, when faced with difficulties, can fall into a state of distrust. Today we are called to look with wonder and new enthusiasm at those who were first in Jesus' school, renouncing the idea of a glorious kingdom and a victorious Messiah, in the living experience of a kingdom "not from this world" (Jn 18:36), but that in this world he will manifest care for the little ones, the hungry, the imprisoned, the forgotten, the voiceless, the insignificant according to the logic of the world (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

Peter and Andrew, James and John and the other eight, like so many others as well as the women who had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem - Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Susanna and many others (cf. Lk 8:1-3) - a chain, over two thousand years long, of names, relationships, encounters, and experiences of that salvation that has also reached each of us, as a community of believers, in that yes that blossomed and was sealed in Baptism.

In this sense, we are called to be ever more men and women who, in the light of the Word are «alive» or better yet «living», «effective» (full of «energy», of «living force»), «sharper» than any two-edged sword, willing to account for the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15) and to proclaim with passion and joy what has been seen, touched, experienced (1 Jn 1:1).

THE WORD OF GOD IN DAILY LIFE

The greater our openness to God's word, the more will we be able to recognize that today too the mystery of Pentecost is taking place in God's Church. The Spirit of the Lord continues to pour out his gifts upon the Church to guide us into all truth, to show us the meaning of the Scriptures and to make us credible heralds of the Word of salvation before the world.

(Verbum Domini, 123)

1. The Word lived courageously

«For I am not ashamed of the gospel» (Rom 1:16)

St. Paul preaches from his experience of Christ, of the grace of the Holy Spirit, knowing that he is a child of God. The Pauline writings do not stop at teaching about the Christian life, but delve into the salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ. In line with the teaching of the Apostles and the faith of the community of believers, St. Paul points to the following «that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day» (1 Cor 15:3-4). To live the faith is deduced from the inherent demands of God-given justification, forgiveness of sins, and sanctification granted in the sacraments, particularly baptism.

In the Apostle's teaching, there is a constant invitation to practice Christian charity, as there is no room for passive living and there is a conviction that all personal responses come from God. There is a danger of trying to build on one's own strength «So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall» (1 Cor 10:12). St. Paul illustrates the intimate and necessary relationship that exists between faith and life: faith demands a way of being, particularly of charity (cf. Gal 5:6), reminding us that such an effort is not consistent unless it is sustained by the power of God.

God's help is needed in the Christian life and in man's helplessness before the law: «For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members» (Rom 7:22-23). Nevertheless, «what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit» (Rom 8:3-4). The disciple needs Christ. In the work of redemption, it is not possible to achieve the justice sought by the law, but only through the Redeemer. Although the law comes from God and is, in itself, good, it does not have the power to give life: «For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law» (Gal 3:21); and, also, its fulfilment could lead man to «boast of himself» (Rom 2:17,23). Only in Christ can humanity win the struggle against sin and fulfil the law.

With divine help, given to humanity, a certain way of life is made possible: «For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life» (Eph 2:10). The ability to do things is radically different with God's grace, starting with the fact that there is a new creation; God's action is not only limited to fostering human endeavours, but it touches the core of each person's situation. «For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ» (Tit 2:11-13; cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Baptism brings about the cultural transfer to the new life into which the believer is introduced: «he

saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit» (Tit 3:5).

The Apostle to the Gentiles compellingly beckons us to follow Christ, the Word of eternal life, in the Spirit: «Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want» (Gal 5:16-17). The fruits of the Spirit are: «love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things» (Gal 5:22-23; cf. 2 Cor 6:6; Eph 5:9; 1 Tim 4:12). «For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace... But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you» (Rom (8:5,6,9).

It is the Spirit who freed the baptized from the oppression of sin and motivates him from within: «If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you» (Rom (8:11). Although St. Paul sometimes addresses the baptized as «slaves of righteousness» (Rom 6:18) or also «enslaved to God» (Rom 6:22); he always does so in terms of analogy. The Spirit guides, never compels or presses a particular action; on the contrary, it calls for free will in all circumstances (cf. Rom 8:14). The Spirit is not only an «interior guide», but above all, the origin of a truly divine life in Christ.

«Living in Christ, existing in Christ» means that the life of the follower emanates from his or her union with the Son of God as his or her source, example and author.

2. Biblical examination of conscience

I. Obligations to myself

1. Have I neglected to think with supernatural criteria, following thoughts that are not God's, but those of human beings? (Mk 8:33).
2. Am I a Christian like «insipid salt» or a «hidden light» (Mt 5:13) and like «yeast that does not leaven the flour?» (Mt 13:33)
3. Do I love my neighbour, but hate my enemy? (Mt 5:43).
4. Do I dare walk the narrow way? (Mt 7:14).
5. Do I want to take the first place and be honoured by others? (Lk 14:8).
6. Would I rather be served than serve? (Mt 20:28).
7. Do I let my mood take over and not fulfil my commitments? (Lc 16:10).
8. Do I want to overcome evil with evil? (Rom 12:21).

II. Obligations to others

9. Do I see Jesus in the hungry, do I see him in the sick or in the imprisoned? (Mt 25:42).
10. Do I help the wounded man on the side of the road or do I turn away? (Lk 10:31).
11. Do I return "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth" and not turn the other cheek when I am struck? (Mt 5:39).
12. Do I see the speck in the other's eye without seeing the plank in my own? (Mt 7:3).
13. Have I hurt my brother or sister with sarcasm, forgetfulness, misunderstanding? (Mt 5:22).
14. Do I create division and not want to cooperate with those who are not of my liking? (Mk 9:38).
15. Do I not consider others to be above me? (Phil 2:3).

III. Obligations to God

16. Do I no longer love Jesus Christ above all things, nor do I consider things rubbish, as long as I possess them? (Phil 3:8).
17. Have I let my first love grow cold? (Rev 2:2-5).
18. Do I want to follow God without taking up my cross and denying myself? (Lk 9:23).
19. Am I satisfied with saying «Lord, Lord»? Do I talk too much and do too little? (Mt 7:22).
20. Do I save my perfume and does it seem wrong to pour it on Jesus' feet? (Lk 12:5).
21. Do I think it is possible to serve God and money? (Mt 6:24).
22. After putting my hand to the plow, do I look back? (Lk 9:62).
23. Do I let my lamp go out when the Lord is late in coming? (Mt 25:11).

3. Pastoral proposals

The Christian loves the Word of God conveyed in Sacred Scripture because «ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ» (St. Jerome). An encounter with God's Word is an encounter with the one we love, so we need to have frequent contact with God's Word and place it at the centre of our lives.

Always carry the Word with you on your cell phone. Practical Tips

The cell phone has become not only an everyday device, but also an extension of one's person, especially for younger people, who cannot leave the house without it, carrying it everywhere and at all times. It has become indispensable. During the customary Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis invited the faithful to carry the Bible with them everywhere, just as we do with our smartphones. Our challenge as Christians is to make sure that this device, now part of our lives, helps us in our faith journey.

As we well know, you can easily have the Bible on your cell phone to refer to it at any time, there are different applications and internet pages in different languages, not only with the Bible but also with the daily readings for Holy Mass, pages where you can read or listen to the Word of God, as well as pages with commentaries and reflections. Some texts from Holy Scripture are even combined with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and some reflections, for example YOUCAT Daily, is available in 6 languages.

It is suggested that you have one of these apps (the one that is most helpful to you) on the main page of your cell phone and put a reminder in your notifications to have one moment a day to encounter God's Word, so that it is with you wherever you go.

Have you already read the whole Bible?

There are Bible apps in which you can set reading plans, read verses and insert highlights, bookmarks; there is also the quick share function in social media.

Do you know the constitution *Dei Verbum*?

The constitution *Dei Verbum* is the document of the Second Vatican Council that deals with Divine Revelation, which we receive in a particular way through Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. It can be found easily on the vatican.va website.

Delving deeper into *Dei Verbum*!

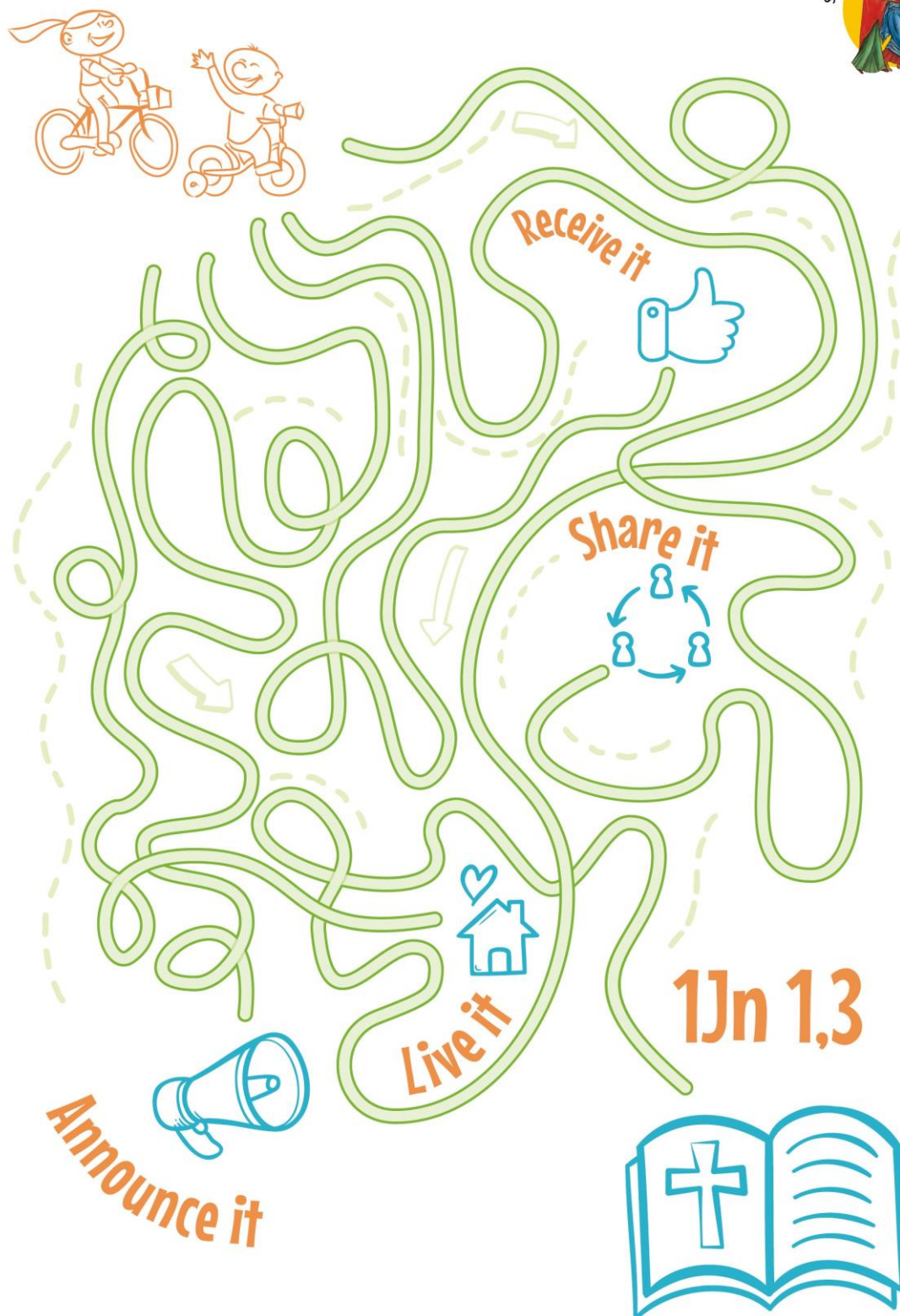
To delve deeper into this valuable document, we suggest reading the first small booklets prepared by the Dicastery on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council and as preparation for Jubilee 2025 (Cf. p. 16).

Visit a Church

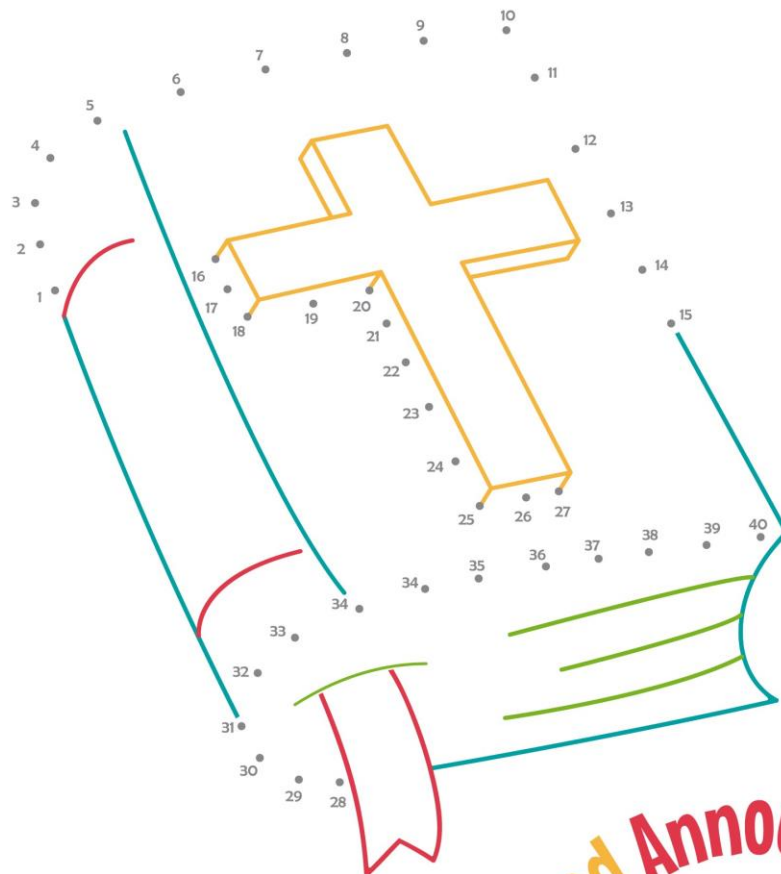
For children and young people, it might also be possible to suggest a "mystagogical" activity of this kind: go into a Church in your own diocese that has frescoes, mosaics or stained glass and identify the biblical episodes they recount, dwelling on the details, the looks, the aspects that may arouse particular curiosity.

The Word of God for children

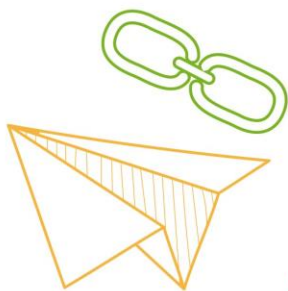
Follow the paths to find God's word and what you need to do to receive it.



Connect the dots following the numeric order.
When finished, colour the images.



Receive it, Share it, Live it and Announce it



1Jn 1,3

APPENDIX: HERALDS OF THE WORD!

In this way, therefore, through the reading and study of the sacred books "the word of God may spread rapidly and be glorified" (2 Thess 3:1) and the treasure of revelation, entrusted to the Church, may more and more fill the hearts of men. Just as the life of the Church is strengthened through more frequent celebration of the Eucharistic mystery, similar we may hope for a new stimulus for the life of the Spirit from a growing reverence for the word of God, which "lasts forever" (Is 40:8; see 1 Pet 1:23-25).

(Dei Verbum, 26)

1. Declare what you have seen (cf. 1 Jn 1:3)

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, wants to offer all followers of the Crucified and Risen Messiah what is most desirable: communion of everyone with the Father and the Son. Therefore, he cannot help but proclaim what he has seen and heard, together with the other early disciples of Christ. Their *koinonia* - the fruit of Easter - is based on precisely these three pillars: seeing, hearing, proclaiming. *Proclaiming* what has been experienced is about *sharing*, spreading to all humanity God's happiness, offered again to his creatures in the new creation even more abundantly than in the first creation.

Already at the beginning of his mission, Jesus summarized the entire Gospel in the eight beatitudes, which were definitive expressions in assigning the Kingdom to the disciples. Being "performative words" that fulfil what they say, the eight "*macarisms*" offered the same happiness of God even to those who would have pure hearts. These very ones would see God! (cf. Mt 5:8).

See God

It is a longing that every human heart carries within it, even subconsciously, each being shaped by God in His image and likeness and animated by His Spirit. One of Jesus' disciples expressed it in his own way, "Let us see the Father and that will be enough for us." From Christ's response in the Upper Room, we all learned, "He who sees me, sees the Father" (cf. Jn 14:8-9).

However, since Heaven took the Risen One out of human sight (cf. Acts 1:9), to see Jesus in order to see the Father leads us back to the gift and task of seeing Him in every other human being! A mere "looking" will not suffice here, since it does not automatically coincide with "seeing," as Jesus himself had experienced regarding his Person and work (cf. Mt 13:10-17).

At the eschatological conclusion of salvation history, "when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). Before this happens, immersed in history, we are invited to walk with the eyes of a "pure heart" - happy eyes, because they are able to "intuit" and "perceive" signs of Jesus' presence in every brother and sister, for whom He had offered Himself on the cross. It was the supreme revelation of God's love, which - in Paul's words - "proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

It is what the Beloved Disciple saw with his own eyes as he stood under the cross of Christ, together with his mother Mary. It is what - following the news that came through Mary of Magdala on the morning of the resurrection - as he ran with Peter to the empty tomb, he finally "saw and believed" (Jn 20:8).

What did the first witnesses see?

Before the Risen One appeared before them in person, they saw all the signs that the tragedy of Good Friday had turned into what was promised to them: it was the beginning

of the new creation, the victory of love and life that no longer dies. It was the beginning of what they would come to understand even more clearly with the outpouring of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost: everything was recapitulated in Christ and humanity could breathe the air of the wedding of the Lamb, preparing to become his Bride forever.

Can we see this in the history full of contradictions and persecutions that followed afterwards? With the eyes of a pure heart one can. And it is not only a matter of "seeing" that every other human being is a "tabernacle" of Christ, but also that the power of the new creation is accomplished in the weakness of its witnesses (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). It is necessary to "see" i.e., "understand" with the Spirit's help, how throughout history creation continues to groan and suffer "in labour pains," waiting impatiently for the revelation of God's children, while humanity continues to yearn for the ultimate "adoption as sons" and "the redemption of our bodies" (cf. Rom 8:19-25).

Here again it is Paul who helps us to better understand what John told us to do: to "proclaim" what we have seen! But John sums it up in the term "*koinonia*." It is that communion which in the Spirit of Love becomes a final embrace of humanity re-established in Christ (children in the Son) by the eternal Father, who found in Adam's heart that paradise he had wanted to enjoy with the children of humanity.

How to announce it? Word and works...

If you have "seen" and "heard" something of vital importance, you cannot be silent about it, even though it will not always be the "mouth" that will be the first to announce the novelty of "Life without end." God's Love poured abundantly into the hearts of believers (cf. Rom 5:5) is both a strength and God's plan capable of creating the structures corresponding to the agapic identity of humanity reborn in Easter. What was perceived in antiquity as true, good, beautiful and just may again translate into accomplishments of peace and dynamisms of growth, becoming the soul of creativity typical of each new human generation.

As in the beginning, here, too, it will be worth trusting Jesus' promise that – in the face of times of resistance and persecution -- Christ's apostles will also receive embodied Higher Intelligence in every situation: "do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:19-20).

There will be "stages" of interhuman and ever-new encounters. Human technologies will autonomously, often arrogantly and soullessly propose "digital havens" of all kinds, where, however, the "human touch" will flourish with even more fruitful vitality, since no machine will replace the human embrace, the sign of the ultimate embrace in God (the Johannine *koinonía*). Human relationships will be reborn, interwoven with bonds of gift that know how to offer themselves for the Other even losing their lives. For this is the *humanness* dreamed of by God and regained in the heart of Christ, pierced for love and returned to life with his peace that – proclaimed – is constant therapy for the never-ending human wounds, assumed by the Risen One as His own.

2. The logo for the Sunday of the Word of God

The Disciples

"Two of them were on their way 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 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 him self came up and walked by their side" (Lk 24:16).

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: "And their eyes were opened and they recognised him" (Lk 24:31).

The Star

Pointed to by the Risen One, it is the sign of Evangelisation: "Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread." (Lk 24:35).



The Scroll

In the dialogue between the Old and New Testaments the mystery of salvation is revealed. "Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages through out the scriptures that were about himself." (Lk 24:27).

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 for my steps and a light for my path." (Ps 118:105). For this, "that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem" (Lk 24:33).

The Walking Stick

Weak and insecure like all human certainties, it expresses the frailty of the disciples who "stopped short, their faces downcast" (Lk 24:17). The Risen One gives them strength with the Word "cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely... it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts." (Heb 4:12).

The Logo of the Sunday of 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 travellers, 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).



«We declare to you
what we have seen »

(1 Jn 1:3)