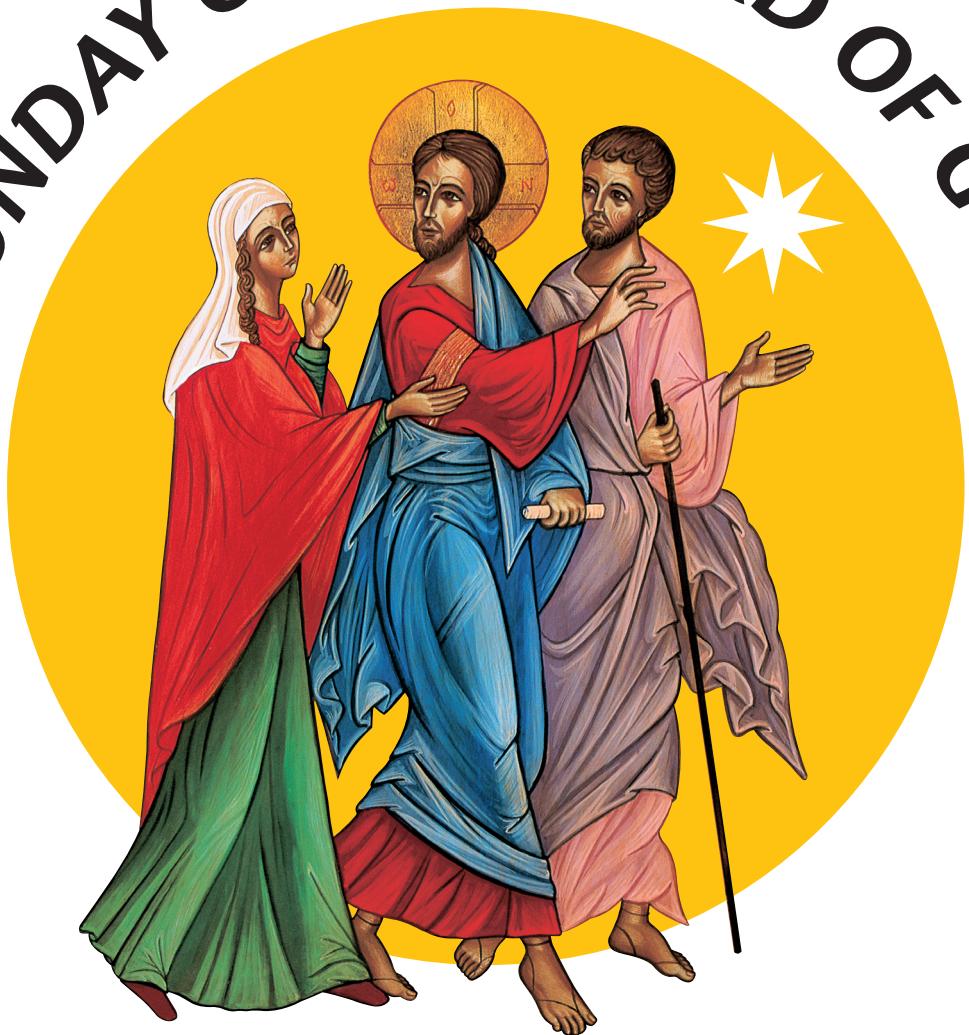


SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD



2026

Catholic Biblical Federation

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL AMONG YOU
(Col 3:16)

**TOWARDS THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF
THE WORD OF GOD**

25 January 2026 - Online Conference
(Moderator: Ernesto Borghi, Svizzera Italiana)

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL AMONG YOU
(Col 3:16)

The seventh edition of the ‘Sunday of the Word of God’ (25 January 2026) aims to help all those interested in words that bring full humanity to life to give ever greater space to the Word of God in their lives. In this meeting, we will offer some reflections based on two passages that speak in different ways about the power and value of this Word in everyone’s daily life, from ancient times to our own.

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Introduction

Ernesto Borghi

On this seventh Sunday of the Word of God entitled ‘Let the word of Christ dwell among you’, based on Colossians 3:16, we at the Catholic Biblical Federation have decided not to consider this merely as a passionate invitation from the author of this New Testament letter, but above all as a responsibility that can be taken on by every person who thinks and says they believe in the God of Jesus Christ.

How can we bring the Word of Christ, that is, the most concrete and daily fraternal love, into our lives and the lives of others?

If we look back over the entire biblical revelation, particularly at this stage in human history when injustice and selfishness seem to be increasingly widespread, then we are faced with a constant reminder: loving God is an effective choice based on how much we truly want good for ourselves and for others. Without coercion or obligation, but also constantly asking ourselves what meaning everyday life can have without the practice of free and open, intelligent and passionate love. The Word of God is, in the final and culminating analysis, Jesus Christ, that is, the presence of love in the lives of all those who open themselves to this logic of life. It is a wise and vitalising Word, which we need to reflect on more and more every day.

With this in mind, we asked three colleagues and friends from three different continents - Adrian Graffy from Europe, Adrian Taranzano from South America and Nicoletta Gatti practically from Africa - to offer us some reflections on two biblical texts that are very eloquent on the subject - Wisdom 18:14-16 and Colossians 3:5-17 - and on how to effectively bring the Word of God into everyone’s life. Our Catholic Biblical Federation exists and has meaning if it succeeds in collaborating on a goal that is essential to the very action and existence of the Church of Jesus Christ: to make the Word of God contained in the biblical Scriptures an ever greater point of reference for the lives of as many people as possible in the world. The Catholic Biblical Federation has a global reach. Its economic resources are certainly more limited than would be useful and necessary, but its work over several decades is all the more significant when it is the fruit of the cordial and creative interaction of many people of different nationalities, languages and cultures.

Each of the three colleagues will speak in their mother tongue and the text of their speech is available, as the Federation has done in the five previous initiatives for ‘The Sunday of the Word of God’ from 2020 to the present, in three other languages.

Presentation of the speeches

First, we give the floor to **Adrian Graffy**, born in Ilford (England) in 1950, ordained priest for the Diocese of Brentwood in 1974. He is the director of the website www.whatgoodnews.org. Since 2014, he has been a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. His presentation is entitled ‘FOR A WORD OF WISDOM (Wisdom 18:14-16)’.

The second speaker at our meeting is **Adrian Taranzano**. Born in Balnearia (Argentina) in 1974, he is married and has one son. He currently teaches exegesis at the ISCR of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Valencia and is a research fellow at the Faculty of Theology of the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität in Munich. The title of his presentation is ‘For a Word of Life (Colossians 3:5-17)’.

The series of speakers concludes with **Nicoletta Gatti**, born in Rovereto (Italy) in 1961, who has been living in Africa for thirty years. She currently lives in Ghana, where she teaches African hermeneutics and biblical theology at university level (Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon). The title of her talk is ‘For a Pastoral Use of the Word’ in the Ghanaian cultural context.

For a Word of Wisdom

(Wis 18,14-16)

By Adrian Graffy

«When peaceful silence enveloped all, and night had run the half of her swift course, down from the heavens, from the royal throne, leapt your all-powerful Word like a stern warrior into the heart of the doomed land. Carrying your unambiguous command like a sharp sword it stood and filled the universe with death; though standing on the earth, it touched the sky» (Wisdom 18:14-16).

On this seventh Sunday of the Word, we reflect on a biblical book that bridges Jewish and Greek culture, yet is little known in the Church and in society: the Book of Wisdom. Two verses from the Book of Wisdom (18:14-15a), the Wisdom of Solomon, feature in the Catholic liturgy on the days after Christmas, particularly as the ‘entrance antiphon’ for the Mass of the Second Sunday of Christmas.

Even though *logos* and *dabar* do not appear in Genesis 1 it is important to recall that the first act of God is to speak, to deliver the Word. Gen 1:1 provides the title ‘In the beginning God created heaven and earth’. Gen 1:2 gives us a description of the pre-creation chaos, with the ‘formless void’, the ‘darkness’ and the ‘mighty wind’. It is only in verse 3 that God begins to act, creating by the power of God’s word. The Word liberates reality from chaos, bringing light and life.

The power of the word is celebrated again in the final lines of Second Isaiah. As in Wisdom 18, Isaiah 55:10-11 speaks of the coming down of the Word: ‘As the rain and the snow come down (*yarad*) from the sky and do not return before watering the earth.....so it is with the word that goes forth from my mouth (*ken yihyeh debari asher yetse mippi*).’ He continues: ‘It does not return to me unfulfilled or before carrying out my purpose and achieving what it was sent to do’.

The Book of Wisdom, written probably in the second or first century BC, was composed in Greek in Egypt and is attributed to Solomon, remembered for his wisdom and his collection of wise sayings. [His wisdom ‘surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt’ (1 Kings 5:10). He ‘composed three thousand proverbs’ (v.10) some of which no doubt found their way into the book of Proverbs.]

The context is the hostility to and persecution of the Jews of Alexandria by the Ptolemies, rulers of Egypt after the collapse of the empire of Alexander the Great. The writer of Wisdom, thought to be a Jew of Hellenistic culture born and educated outside Palestine, is inspired by

the legendary figure of Solomon. He contrasts the wisdom of Judaism with the violence of the pagans. In chapter 9 the author puts into the heart and on the lips of Solomon a prayer for wisdom: 'Grant me Wisdom that shares your throne.' (v.4) The book as a whole is written for Jews persecuted in Egypt and perhaps tempted to embrace pagan ways.

The final part of the book, chapters 10 to 19, traces the presence of Wisdom in the story of Israel, from the 'first man' (10:1). The text refers in secretive fashion to Noah, Jacob, Joseph and Moses 'the servant of the Lord' (10:16). Their names do not appear in the text.

A midrash on the story of the Exodus, the relevance of which to the contemporary situation of the Jews in Alexandria is obvious, begins in 10:15. It reads 'Wisdom delivered a holy people, a blameless race, from a nation of oppressors.' The retelling of the story is guided by the following principle for understanding the action of God: 'Thus what had served to punish their enemies became for them a benefit in their troubles.' (11:5) Several 'antitheses' follow, examples of how the principle of understanding works.

The first antithesis (11:6-8) contrasts the water turned to blood as the first plague against Egypt in Exodus 7 with the provision of water for the people in the desert in Exodus 17:5-6. The antitheses are interrupted by several digressions, among which is a meditation on God's 'moderation' and God's 'kindness', for God is 'lover of life' (*philopsychos*) (11:26). God's sovereignty makes God 'lenient to all' (12:16). A further lengthy digression on the cult of idols reaches its climax with the satire of the woodcutter, who makes an idol out of a piece of wood left over from making furniture (13:11-14).

A later antithesis considers the plague of darkness inflicted on Egypt and contrasts it with the pillar of fire which guided the people on their way (18:3-4).

This is followed by consideration of the final plague, the death of the first-born of Egypt and the escape of the people. In 18:5 the writer recalls the decree of genocide of the males of Israel reported in Exodus 1, and the rescue of the child Moses: 'As they had resolved to kill the infants of the holy ones, and as of those exposed only one child had been saved, you punished them by carrying off their horde of children and by destroying them all in the wild water' (v.5). The second half of the verse combines the tenth plague, the slaughter of the first born of Egypt, with the disaster at the Red Sea.

There is then a poetic elaboration of the night of the Passover. The people await 'the rescue of the upright and the ruin of the enemy' (v.7). The hermeneutical principle announced earlier is at work again here: the same means by which the people are saved brings disaster to the enemy. The Red Sea is the way of escape for the people, and a trap for their enemies.

A few verses focus on the wailing of the people of Egypt mourning at the death of their first-born (v.10). 'Slave and master', 'commoner and king', suffered in the same way (v.11). There were not enough living to bury the dead. The followers of idols must now acknowledge that 'this people is child of God' (*theou huion laon einai*) (v.13).

And so to 18:14-15: 'When peaceful silence enveloped all, and night had run the half of her swift course, down from the heavens, from the royal throne, leapt your all-powerful Word like a stern warrior into the heart of the doomed land.' The Word arrives at night, for the Lord had said to Pharaoh 'At midnight I shall pass through Egypt.' (Exodus 11:4). The fulfilment

of these words comes in Exodus 12:29: ‘At midnight the Lord struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt: from the first-born of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, and the first-born of all the livestock.’

In Wisdom 18:15 the Word (*logos*) is described as ‘all-powerful’ (*ho pantodynamos sou logos*). This powerful Word ‘though standing on the earth, touches the sky’ (18:16). Can we connect this with the powerful word of God in Genesis 1 and with the efficacious word of Isaiah 55? This Word is also a ‘warrior’ (*polemistes*), bringing death to a doomed land. This use of *logos* in the book of Wisdom must be set alongside the earlier verse ‘your Word, Lord, which heals all’ (*ho sos, kyrie, logos ho pantas iomenos*) in 16:12. For the Lord, as the following verse makes clear, ‘holds the power of life and death’ (*su gar zoes kai thanatou exousian echeis*) (16:13).

The final chapter of Wisdom celebrates in exuberant fashion the crossing of the Sea (chapter 19). For the Egyptians this is the final punishment (v.4), while the ‘whole creation’ is recreated to benefit those who are escaping (v.6). ‘They were like horses at pasture, they skipped like lambs, singing your praises Lord, their deliverer (v.9).

What are we to make of the ‘Word’ as presented in the book of Wisdom? It has the power of God for death and for life.

The choice of 18:14-15a for the liturgy of Christmas may have been driven by the ‘peaceful silence’ of night. The shepherds ‘keeping the night watch’ (Luke 2:8) were terrified by the ‘angel of the Lord’ and ‘the glory of the Lord’. This first announcement of the gospel (2:10), recalled in the gospel reading of the Christmas Night Mass, is a positive presentation of the all-powerful Word in Wisdom 18:15.

The primary activity of the Word is to ‘leap’ down from the royal throne. Acts uses the same dynamic verb *hallomai* (aorist *helato*) in reference to two lame men cured in 3:8 and 14:10. (See also Isaiah 35:6 and the lame leaping like a deer.) This Word, which brings death to the doomed land, is also the Word of God able to bring life (16:13). The use of this text at Christmas is surely also due to its ‘coming down’ (*helato*). In this it stands alongside John 1:14 and Colossians 3:16, two significant uses of *logos* in reference to Christ. From John: ‘The Word (*ho logos*) was made flesh, and made his tent (*eskenosen*) among us’. And, from Paul: ‘May the word of Christ (*ho logos tou Christou*) make his home (*enoikeito*) among you.’

The Word, which on one night visits the earth in Wisdom 18:15 to inflict punishment, in Christ comes to live and remain among us as a life-giving presence. What matters is that many words in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and New Testament are capable of giving life, making everyone reflect on the need to open themselves up every day to their own good and that of others.

For a Word of life

(Col 3:5-17)

by Adrián Taranzano

Introduction: an initiative in continuity with the Second Vatican Council

Pope Francis' initiative to dedicate one Sunday during the year to the Word of God can be understood in continuity with the concern of the Second Vatican Council and its effort not only to bring Sacred Scripture closer to the faithful, but also to make it the soul of the believer's existence. For a long time, Scripture was largely unknown or ignored. Reduced to a mere source of *dicta probantia* in theology or replaced in spiritual life by other religious literature, contact with the 'spring of living water' was lost, replaced by 'broken cisterns that cannot hold water' (Jer 2:13).

This evocative image linked to water by the prophet Jeremiah to refer to the relationship with the living God is not far from the magnificent expression of St Ephrem, Doctor of the Church and 'harp of God', who links Scripture with that source capable of quenching thirst and "hydrating" the whole of Christian life: "What you have received and achieved is your share, what remains is your inheritance. What you cannot receive at a given moment because of your weakness, you will be able to receive at another time, if you persevere. Do not strive greedily to drink in one gulp what cannot be drunk at once, nor give up out of laziness what you can drink little by little" (St Ephrem, *On the Diatessaron* 1:19).

Motto for the year 2026

This seventh year of celebration invites us to reflect on a meaningful expression taken from the Pauline tradition and formulated in the Letter to the Church of Colossae: 'Ο λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως', 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly' (Col 3:16). But let us read the context of this exhortation from the letter:

Col 3

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Therefore, put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual

immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶All these things bring God's wrath upon the disobedient. ⁷You also once practised these things when you lived in them. ⁸But now, put away all these things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene language from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator, ¹¹where there is no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. ¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a complaint against another. As the Lord has forgiven you, so also forgive one another. ¹⁴And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Recipients of the Letter

The recipient of these words is a community in the south-west of the Anatolian peninsula, in the region of Phrygia, located about 200 km from Ephesus and near Hierapolis and Laodicea¹. It was home to peoples of diverse cultures, and orgiastic cults were practised in the region. Religious syncretism was a reality and a threat to those who had embraced the gospel. Given that by the end of the first century the city of Colossae was no longer populated², it must be assumed that the letter was written in the second half of that first century.

According to Col 2:1, the Colossians did not know Paul personally, but only his co-workers. However, the Paul of the letter understands himself to be responsible for the faith of the community and feels the urgency to propose the divine mystery in Christ in order to dispel the threat of 'philosophy' (Col 2:8) foreign to the gospel, probably from some esoteric and syncretistic Judeo-Christian group close to pagan mystery cults³.

Central ideas

The quotation is found in the third chapter of the current division, in a section characterised by its parenetic style. Before exhorting specific groups of people (cf. Col 3:18–4:1), the author does so in a general way (cf. Col 3:1–17).

1 Cf. A. Piñero, *Los Libros del Nuevo Testamento. Traducción y Comentario*, Madrid 2021, 1742–1743.

2 Cf. Piñero, *Los Libros*, 1743.

3 Cf. Piñero, *Los libros*, 1743. Cf. also M. Theobald, *Der Kolossalbrief*, in M. Ebner – S. Schreiber (eds.), *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Stuttgart 2008, 431–445, 439–441.

It should not be forgotten that parenesis is a consequence of the gift received. In the prologue, the author has developed the Christocentric foundation of the mystery of salvation (cf. Col 1:15-20)⁴ and placed his own ministry and mission in that context (Col 1:24-2:5).

Who is Christ for the author? In Col 1:15-20 we find one of the most beautiful hymns in the New Testament. There he is described as the image of the invisible God, the foundation of all creation and the architect of reconciliation.

But this hymn, read from the exhortation that has been chosen as the motto for the Sunday of the Word of God, can be said that, for the text addressed to the believers of Colossae, Christ is not only the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), but also the voice and word of the ineffable God, who now becomes human voice and word. Just as the invisible God is seen in the features of Christ, so too his ineffable voice is heard in his human voice. Christ is both the image of the invisible God and the word, the human voice of the God who once spoke ‘from heaven’ to Israel (cf. Deut 4:36-39), but who now speaks ‘from below’, face to face, in his Son.

Christ is the living word that is addressed even to those who are not of the circumcision. Christ is the Word of God who does not distinguish between Jew and Greek, between male and female, between free and slave. It can be said that for the author of the letter, God has ‘circumcised in Christ’ (cf. Col 2:11) the Gentiles⁵, who through faith and baptism are already resurrected.

Division of the section

We could say that the first part of the parenetic chapter presents these elements:

- a) A memory of the gift: believers have been raised with Christ (Col 3:1), they have died with him and their lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3), until he is revealed and makes believers share in his glory (Col 3:4).
- b) Exhortation, in the second person, to put to death vices: believers must put to death all those behaviours and vices that had characterised them (Col 3:5-9), before they put on the new self (Col 3:10-11).
- c) Exhortation, in the second person, to put on the attitudes of the new man: those who are reconciled are characterised by attitudes that build community (Col 3:12-14) and that culminate in love (Col 3:14).
- d) Double exhortation, in the third person, to the empire of Christ’s peace, understood as the vocation to which they have been called, in one body (Col 3:15) and, secondly, to the indwelling of the Word of Christ (Col 3:16), in a context of teaching and liturgical praise.
- e) Final exhortation to orient one’s words and deeds Christocentrically, giving thanks to the Father through him (Col 3:17).

4 For a detailed and technical presentation of the structure of the letter, cf. Theobald, *Kolossalbrief*, 431-433.

5 Cf. Theobald, *Kolossalbrief*, 441.

In this already resurrected life, the exhortation to live Christocentrically is not an imposition or external commandment, but the unfolding of what has been received.

The parenetic section begins by reminding us of this and then lists, first of all, the vices and behaviours incompatible with the new reality of the new man. But the description does not end with the behaviours to be avoided, but leads to those to be displayed.

The condition proper to new men who have stripped themselves of the old requires, above all, that they clothe themselves with compassion (*σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ*, Col 3:12). The bowels express the deep intimacy of the human being. It is a beautiful exhortation that is full of consequences. It is not for nothing that the influential German theologian J. B. Metz has stated that in compassion we have the ‘universal programme of Christianity’⁶.

Mysticism, an existence in the Spirit, is not possible without a heart capable of feeling and suffering with, in communion with, the frailties and anxieties of others. It is important to note that the wording of the letter is parallel to that found in the canticle of Zechariah (*σπλάγχνα ἐλέος*, Lk 1:78) and explains the very intimacy of God. From God’s heart of mercy springs his plan and saving visitation. In the letter, it is the same characteristic that resurrected believers must have with one another.

The author does not ignore conflictual relationships or the fragility of bonds. He assumes that offences and tensions exist. In the face of these, magnanimity and forgiveness are the only way forward. Therefore, the author exhorts them to forgive one another, just as the Lord has forgiven them. It is like an echo of the Lord’s Prayer (cf. Mt 6:12), but while in the latter the foundation was theocentric, here the exhortation is based on the forgiveness received from the Lord, Christ.

We could almost say that he is also the firstborn of those who forgive. Those who live in him cannot remain prisoners of resentment or rancour.

The letter summarises the path described in the exhortation to clothe oneself with love, with *ἀγάπη*, considered as the bond, the ligament of perfection (Col 3:14). The author describes it with the same expression he used earlier when speaking of the union of the head and the body, which, through joints and ligaments, achieve their cohesion. The thought is analogous to that found in relation to the ‘most excellent way’ that Paul eloquently describes in the hymn to love (cf. 1 Cor 12:31-13:13).

Only in this way can the author conclude by wishing that both peace and the word of Christ take deep root in each of the believers. In relation to the expression “word of Christ”, the use of the verb *ἐνοικέω*, “to dwell in”, is suggestive. The word of Christ is not the unquestionable oracle from above, which is heard and must simply be obeyed, but the voice that is welcomed and enters into dialogue and communion, that “installs” itself in existence itself. It is a verb that has a strong physical connotation. In the Greek translation of the Bible, it is a verb that appears mainly in the book of the prophet Isaiah to designate the inhabitants of a place such as Jerusalem (cf. Is 22:21). The believer is thus inhabited by the Word of Christ.

⁶ J.-B. Metz, *Compassion. Towards a Global Programme for Christianity in an Age of Religious and Cultural Pluralism*, in Id. - L. Kuld - A. Weisbrod (eds.), *Compassion - Global Programme for Christianity. Learning Social Responsibility*, Freiburg – Basel – Vienna 2000, 13.

If the famous Johannine hymn contemplates the logos that became flesh and pitched his tent among the tents of men (cf. Jn 1:14) and expresses its temporary nature through the verb σκηνώω, the Deuteropauline text alludes to an indwelling and a presence of the word that we could define as *permanent*. The idea of pitching a tent implies that, at some point, it will have to be taken down again. The tent is transitory, as has been the historical existence of the logos made flesh. The sense of dwelling, on the other hand, relates to the idea of a permanent abode. All this takes shape not only in relation to teaching and instruction, but also to liturgical praise. The word is welcomed, learned and celebrated. The word dwells to the extent that praise becomes a form of existence.

The Paul of the letter, however, does not identify this situation with the eschaton, but contemplates the humanly overwhelming mission that lies ahead and, in this sense, in addition to the exhortation to be grateful, the apostle implores believers to pray that ‘a door for the word’ (Col 4:3) may be opened to them and that the mystery of Christ may continue to be proclaimed. Believers inhabited by the Word intercede so that the Word of Christ may also dwell in those who have not received the Gospel of Christ.

In this final invitation from the chained Paul in his letter, we can contemplate the missionary imperative of the whole Church. Being inhabited by the Word is not exhausted in the joy of encounter and presence, but involves a restless spirit until that Word also dwells in everyone. The Word is received *in order to* be transmitted.

The pastoral use of the Word

by Nicoletta Gatti

Introduction: The Word at the Heart of Pastoral Ministry

The Church's journey toward an authentically biblical pastoral practice has witnessed fundamental milestones over the past sixty years. From *Dei Verbum* (1965) to *L'interpretazione della Bibbia nella Chiesa* (*IB* – 1993), to *Verbum Domini* (*VD* - 2010), from *Evangelii Gaudium* (*EG* - 2013) to the institution of the Sunday of the Word of God through *Aperuit Illis* (*AI* - 2019) and the ministry of Catechist through *Antiquum Ministerium* (*AM* – 2021), the Magisterium has continuously reaffirmed that the Church's proclamation—both *ad intra* in pastoral ministry and *ad extra* in evangelization—must be grounded in Sacred Scripture.

Not only the homily must be nourished by the Word of God. All evangelization is founded on it, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated, and witnessed. Sacred Scripture is the source of evangelization. It is indispensable that the Word of God become ever more the heart of all ecclesial activity" (EG 174).

Yet the very fact that this message continues to be repeated indicates that the goal remains distant. In some contexts, the journey is still at the starting point: biblical pastoral ministry is reduced to adding a few symbols during the liturgy of the Sunday of the Word or producing booklets for a dedicated week. In other contexts, however, this awareness has generated interesting and innovative initiatives. Everywhere, though, development still depends much on the sensitivity of the bishop or priest in charge.

The questions guiding our reflection are, therefore, these: how biblical is our pastoral ministry? How can we rediscover the vital relationship with the Word of God that nourishes faith and transforms life?

Reading the Word: A Transforming Dialogue

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she has venerated the Body of the Lord himself. This affirmation from *Dei Verbum* reminds us that between the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist there exists a profound and inseparable bond. Prayer through the Word has characterized the Jewish-Christian experience of God from its very origins. It is not a matter of mystical immersion into the abyss of the universe; it is not simply an encounter with the God who dwells within us, but something more: it is the encounter with a God who speaks, who emerges from silence, who becomes dialogue.

Human history, from the biblical perspective, can be described as the place where God emerges from his isolation and his silence to speak with humanity. Sacred Scripture bears witness to all this, characterizing itself as a terrain of encounter and sometimes of conflict—the space in which God engages in an intense dialogue with humanity. A dialogue at times difficult and conflictual—we think of the lamentations of Job, the imprecatory psalms, the protests of the prophets—yet always reinvented and sought after. God reveals himself as the *Other*, as the *You* who in revealing himself reveals, the *You* of relationship.

Human prayer, expressing the desire to enter this sacred space, to welcome God and to walk toward him, cannot prescind from Scripture. Every other path distances us from the One who has already spoken.

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son (Heb 1:1-2).

The Son is the Word made flesh, the Logos who pitched his tent among us. To pray the Word, therefore, means to enter into this mystery of incarnation: God who draws near, who assumes human language, who accepts the limits of earthly communication to reach us where we are.

Walking with the Word: Scripture as a Space of Encounter

“The Text must resist. Only those who can accept its silences will be able to hear its voice” (Fusco). This statement expresses well the meaning of praying *with* the Word: a slow, sometimes arduous, journey of two. An interpersonal relationship made of silences and words, of listening and waiting, of nearness and otherness. It is the encounter with the One who has become written Word because he ardently desires to be welcomed, meditated upon, ‘consumed’ by the praying reader.

For this reason, praying with Scripture requires time, patience, perseverance. It is not an exercise that produces immediate fruit. As Gregory the Great wrote with an image that spans the centuries, the divine words grow with the one who reads them: *quia divina eloquia cum legente crescunt*¹. The Word is not a dead text to be analysed, but a living interlocutor who progressively reveals himself to those who frequent him with fidelity.

The Torah: A Dialogue of Love between God and His People

In the Jewish tradition, the term *Torah* does not simply mean ‘law.’ The Hebrew root evokes the idea of aiming at a target, of shooting an arrow toward the centre, of indicating a direction. It also has resonances with the root of the term to conceive, and can, therefore, evoke the idea of a filial existence, shaped according to the Creator’s original dream.

¹ *Homiliae in Ezechielem*, I,VII,8 (CCL 142).

The *Torah* is the humble love of a God who accepts to contract himself, to ‘diminish’ assuming the weakness of human language to become dialogue. The Word of God that reveals itself can be compared to those who received it, transmitted it, and continue to transmit it in the master-disciple relationship. The *Torah* is love that generates love. An ancient rabbinic teaching affirms: “Turn it and turn it again, the Torah, for everything is in it. Even if a person alone sits down to occupy himself with the Torah, the divine presence is with him”.

The rabbinic tradition offers us a poetic and profound image of the relationship with Scripture. The *Torah* is compared to a beautiful woman who appears briefly at the window of her house. The lover, mad with love for her, gazes intently through the frame, searching in every direction. She knows that her lover persists in frequenting her home. And what does she do? She opens just slightly the door of her remote chamber, reveals her face for an instant to the beloved, and immediately hides it again. The lover sees her and is drawn inwardly toward her with his heart, with his soul, with his whole being.

Such is the relationship with the Word: a passionate search, a desire that grows in waiting, a revelation that unveils itself little by little to those who persevere in love.

The Church Fathers: Eating the Word

The Church Fathers developed a profound spirituality of the Word, often using eucharistic language to describe the encounter with Scripture. Saint Jerome wrote:

We eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of Christ in the Eucharist and, in the same way, in the reading of the Scriptures. I consider the Gospel to be the Body of Christ: therefore, in the sacred books I seek Christ. In the reading of the Word I consume Christ, the Word broken for all².

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus employs the same image: “When I open the Gospels with faith, I consume the Paschal Lamb”³. And again, from the patristic tradition comes this invitation:

When you open the Sacred Texts, you begin a journey of two: you and the Spirit. Cry out: Lord, come! And then, by the power of the Spirit, Christ will come. We can read the Word only heart to heart with Jesus: whoever approaches the Word takes a seat at the table of the Last Supper⁴.

These images—eating, consuming, nourishing oneself—tell us that the Word is not simply to be studied or understood intellectually. The Word is to be assimilated, made one’s own, allowed to become part of us, just as the food we eat becomes our body.

2 *Commentarium in Ecclesiasten* III, 12-13 (PL 23, 1039A).

3 *Oratio 1, On Easter*, III-IV (PG 35, 396-401).

4 Jong Crisostome, *Homily*, 48 (PG 64, 462-466).

Origen further develops this spirituality with a suggestive image: «The more you read, the more you grow. Reading will make of your soul a new ark of the covenant, which preserves within itself the eternal firmness of the one and the other Testament»⁵.

Living in the Word: Becoming a Gospel

But the journey does not stop here. After *reading* the Word, and *walking with* the Word, we are called to *live in* the Word. What does this mean? It means allowing the Word to shape our humanity, to transform us until we ourselves become the living word of God for others.

It is the intuition of being a sign, a presence of God in the world, good news—in a way that God alone can bring about. Unfortunately, only rarely do we experience how listening to and meditating on the biblical pages can truly become ‘gospel,’ that is, good news capable of freeing us from every unrealistic, petty, or sad idea about ourselves and our destiny.

The Word asks to be incarnated in our words. It humbly requests to become a mutual gift among us. The Paul’s epistles express this forcefully:

“*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*” (Col 3:16).

“*The word of the Lord has sounded forth from you*” (1 Thess 1:8).

“*You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all*” (2 Cor 3:2).

The humanity of today, even in its apparent rejection of God, even in its religious indifference, unconsciously cries out the need to see, touch, contemplate a Word made nearness, future, trust, rock, substance. As John writes in his first letter: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life... we proclaim also to you” (1 John 1:1-3).

The shared Word enables us to live out the prophetic ministry. Faced with urgent challenges arising from the world of work, from the new circumstances in which families live, from the restless condition of young people, our communities need constant training in engaging with the Word of God, to read in its light the concrete human situation.

The cry of the world is too often silenced by walls built of indifference, capable of transforming even hearts into deserts. Our mission—wherever we find ourselves—is to announce the discreet “whisper” of the Lord who already comes, already works, already transforms.

Like the seedling that sprouts unseen, so our daily witness causes hope to blossom. We are sent to be “sowers of hope” in a world imprisoned by war, where the roar of weapons seems to silence every dialogue. While violence divides peoples and fear closes hearts, together we must bear witness that another world is possible: the world of the Prince of Peace who comes, indeed, is already among us.

⁵ *Homilia in Genesim IX,1* (PG 12, 210-211).

As the Scriptures repeatedly affirm, we know that the Lord will come—indeed, is coming—to redeem our labours, to beat swords into ploughshares, to make of our wounds instruments of reconciliation. He comes as forgiveness that opens wide the future, as comfort in suffering, as resurrection light that penetrates the darkness of history.

Praying in the Word transforms us into an extension of Christ's humanity in the world. We become, by grace, that Word which the world awaits without knowing it—that discreet whisper announcing that peace is possible.

Conclusion: Everything Is Fulfilled in You

Dei Verbum 2 describes what we might call the theology of Christian prayer: God reveals himself and grants humanity the meaning of life and history in the light of the divine salvific plan. God 'empties' himself to enter into dialogue with humanity.

And at number 21, we find the affirmation that in the reading of Scripture the same contact with the Body of Christ given to us in the Eucharist takes place. The Word is the continued incarnation of the Logos.

Origen concluded his homilies with an exhortation that still resonates today with all its force: "Do not believe that these events were accomplished in the past: everything is fulfilled in you".

The Word of God is not a memory of the past. It is a present event, grace that happens today, transformation that works now in whoever receives it with faith. Every time we open Scripture, salvation history becomes present. Every time we meditate on a biblical text, God speaks to us now. Every time we allow the Word to shape our lives, we ourselves become the living proclamation of the Gospel.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly". This is not merely a wish, but a vocation. The vocation of every baptized person to become a dwelling place of the Word, to follow the Word so that the Word may through us reach and transform the world.

Concluding remarks and prospects for the future

by Ernesto Borghi

What we have heard from the words of three colleagues rich in technical expertise and educational passion has made it clear, I think, that we have no time to lose. What do I mean by this? That our relationship with the Word of God contained in the biblical Scriptures is too important a treasure not to be at the centre of Christian formation, at all ages and in every ecclesial environment. Too often, excessive energy and time are devoted to formation initiatives that are clearly surpassed by the spiritual and cultural challenges of our age. Today, we really need to ask ourselves what aspects of religious training and education have limited value or no value at all, and how we can effectively change the situation. Doctrinalism and moralism must be completely abandoned.

Educate people to love themselves and others through a serious and existential reading of biblical texts is a truly categorical imperative in our time. We have technological possibilities unlike any other historical period before us. We can also imagine considerable interfaith synergies. These are conditions that can allow us to multiply the opportunities for comparison between the words of the Bible and the life of today and tomorrow.

Everything depends, however, on how seriously we intend to take, that is, to consider authoritative, the discourse that so many biblical passages propose on the expression of justice for all, beyond any form of selfishness and irresponsibility towards others and towards the natural environment.

Letting the Word of the God of Jesus Christ enter into us is not an easily reassuring choice. The author of the letter to the Colossians outlined an ethical framework that refers to a life of great relational intensity. Those who seek a quiet life, where believing means accepting without thinking anything that this or that religious or political authority proposes, are clearly not among those who have the Word of Christ within them.

Freedom of conscience, the search for spiritual values, attention to one's own economic development as well as that of others: these are some of the aspects of a life that is open to the divine words contained in the biblical Scriptures. Let us think about this on this seventh Sunday of the Word, an initiative desired by a bishop of Rome who made care for others, especially the poor and defenceless, one of the defining features of his ministry.

These are characteristics that we must strive to share as much as possible if we want to be truly credible believers in the God of Jesus Christ, both as individuals and as a church community.

Happy Sunday of the Word 2026 to everyone!

Biographies

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Born in Milan (ITA) in 1964, married and father of two children, Doctor in Theology (Uni-Fribourg) and Bachelor in Sacred Scripture (Pontifical Biblical Commission in Rome), professor of Sacred Scripture at the ISSR “Guardini” of Trent and at the PFTIM of Naples (section St Thomas Aquinas), coordinator of the Southern and Western European Sub-Region of the Catholic Bible Federation and coordinator of biblical formation in the diocese of Lugano (CH).

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Born in Ilford (England) in 1950, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Brentwood in 1974. He obtained a doctorate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in 1983 and taught Sacred Scripture at St John’s Seminary in Wonersh from 1983 to 2005. He is the director of the website www.whatgood-news.org. Since 2011, he has been parish priest of Gidea Park, and since 2014, he has been a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Among his most recent writings are: *Reading the Bible Through Lent: All the Lenten scripture readings from the Catholic liturgy*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 2023; “*Sono straniero nel paese*”. *La migrazione secondo la Bibbia*, in «Parola&parole» (29/2024), 13-26.

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Born in Balnearia (Argentina) in 1974, he began his philosophical, biblical and theological studies in Córdoba. He graduated in biblical exegesis from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome (Italy) and obtained his doctorate in theology from the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität in Munich (Germany). He graduated from both European universities with top marks (Summa cum Laude) and in Germany he received the Promotionspreis from the Münchener Universitätsgesellschaft (Förderpreis 2015). He has published several scientific and popular works and has taught at various academic institutions. He currently teaches exegesis at the ISCR of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Valencia and is a scientific collaborator at the Faculty of Theology of the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität in Munich. He

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Born in Rovereto (TN) in 1961, after obtaining a degree in Biblical Sciences from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, she taught Sacred Scripture in Ethiopia. In 2006, she obtained her doctorate in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome with a dissertation entitled *Perché il piccolo diventi fratello. La pedagogia del dialogo nel cap. 18 di Matteo* (PUG, Rome 2008). He currently lives in Ghana, where he teaches African hermeneutics and biblical theology at university level (Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon) and interreligious dialogue, with both academic and pastoral training activities. His writings in Italian include his collaboration on the five volumes of the international project “*Leggere i vangeli per la vita di tutti*” (ABSI-Edizioni Terra Santa, 2017-2022), the essay *L'ingiustizia sociale e il lutto della terra (Isaia 24,4): lettura ecologica di testi profetici*, in «*Parola&parole - monografie*» 30 (2021), 25-35 and with C. Matarazzo the edition of book *Celebrare la fede Trasformare la vita*, Cittadella, Assisi (PG) 2024. His publications in English concern the intercultural reading of biblical texts in the Ghanaian cultural context.

