

## OUTLINE FOR LITURGY ON SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Pope Francis has established the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as **Sunday of the Word of God**. According to his Apostolic Letter, *Aperuit illis, henceforth this Sunday will be* devoted to the “celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God.” The pope asks that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, which falls on January 26 in 2020, be celebrated “with a certain solemnity.” His challenge to us is to “listen to Sacred Scripture and then to practice mercy.”

**Background:** The context of the Pope’s announcement may help us to understand the Pope’s intent in *Aperuit illis*:

- It was announced on the feast of Saint Jerome, the translator of the bible from Greek to Latin.
- The 1600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jerome’s death will be celebrated in 2020. Many countries plan to honor Jerome and the Bible in a “year of the Word.”
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time concludes the octave of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Pope Francis has emphasized the ecumenical nature of the Word of God celebration saying, “Scriptures point out...the path to authentic and firm unity.”
- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has a history of over 100 years in which Christians around the world have taken part in an octave of prayer for visible Christian unity.
- Each October or November, depending on the church calendar, the reformed tradition celebrates “Bible Sunday.” It was begun by the American Bible Society in 1915.
- January 26 also begins Catholic Schools Week.
- In his letter, Pope Francis insists that the Bible is for all. It is “the book of the Lord’s people. In listening to it, [they] move from dispersion and division towards unity.”

In reviewing all of these activities it seems that Pope Francis may be attempting to highlight the element of unity. “God’s word,” Francis says, “has the power to open our eyes to enable us to renounce a stifling and barren individualism and instead to embark on a new path of sharing and solidarity.” Homilists, take note. Pope Francis reminds homilists that “pastors are primarily responsible for explaining Sacred Scripture and helping everyone to understand it.”

**Suggestions from *Aperuit illis*** with additional notes from the Worship Office in italics.

- **Mass Prayers:** NO CHANGE. Use prayers of the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time.
- **Readings:** NO CHANGE. Use readings of the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time.
- **Celebrate the day with solemnity:**
  - Enthroned the Sacred texts
    - *a bible, as the collection of Sacred Scripture, is more appropriate than a Lectionary or Book of the Gospels.*
    - *Display a suitable bible in a visible place in the sanctuary on a decorated easel or stand.*
  - Reflect on the honor due to Scriptures during the homily. Use “simple and suitable language” to help the assembly to “grasp the beauty of the Word and see it applied to their daily lives.”
  - Emphasize “the importance of learning how to read, appreciate and pray daily with Sacred Scripture” by providing a Bible or a book of the Bible to the assembly.
    - *Parish groups may take up the challenge to provide Bibles for those who wish them as the Knights of Columbus and other groups have done in the past.*

*Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ. (St. Jerome)*

Matthew Clark – Office of Worship – Diocese of Erie – 814-824-1270

## OUTLINE FOR LITURGY ON SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

- Share the ecumenical value of the day:
  - *The revision of the Lectionary into a three-year cycle of readings following Vatican II influenced the formation of the Common Lectionary, and the current Revised Common Lectionary, which now unites many Christian denominations.*

### A Pastoral Response from the Office of Worship—

Given the busyness of January with post-Christmas activities, vacations, and return to school, here are some practical ways to respond to the Pope's request while avoiding overload. In general, capitalize on the activities in the parish that already celebrate God's Word. Remind parishioners of existing opportunities and promote these.

Choose a few appropriate actions from the list below:

- Train/update lectors leading up to the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany. See the Worship web page for ideas. Bless **lectors** at the liturgy on Jan. 26th. Use the blessing prayer from the Book of Blessings.
- Recognize/bless those who lead **Liturgy of the Word for Children** each week
- Recognize/bless **Small Christian Communities** that meet regularly to read Scripture, on God's Word and share their lives in the context of that Word.
- Remind the assembly of **Bible study** sessions already on the calendar. Or, announce a day in the not-to-distant future for beginning such sessions.
- Make available some of the **resources for Bible study** from Little Rock, Liturgical Press, Bishop Barron's videos on how to read the Bible, etc.
- Consider a simple **ecumenical session** on the Word with nearby religious leaders. Nothing fancy. "How we share the Scriptures." Reflect on the similarities between the Roman Catholic and the Revised Common Lectionary and the collaboration that created the RCL.
- Make **Bibles** available in your community so that, as Pope Francis wrote, the assembly can "hold the word of God in our hands everyday".
- Is there a **book club** in the parish? Consider reading or surveying Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* or Pope Benedict's *Verbum Domini* which address the richness of the role of Scripture in our lives.
- Connect this day with any local celebrations concluding the **Week of Prayer for Christians Unity**, January 18-26.
- Use this day to connect the life of the church and family life with **Catholic Schools Week**.

*Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.* (St. Jerome)

Matthew Clark – Office of Worship – Diocese of Erie – 814-824-1270