



Diocese of Northampton
LITURGY COMMISSION
Liturgical Formation

MINISTERS of the WORD of GOD
a Reflection Course

- I. How we understand God's Word as Catholics
- II. The Word of God in our Liturgy
- III. How we proclaim the Word

The God Who Speaks:
2020 A Year of the Word
celebrating, living and
sharing God's word



I. How we understand God's Word as Catholics

1. The Scriptures are the Word of God
2. The Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament]
3. The Christian Scriptures [New Testament]
4. The Living Word
5. A way of looking on Scripture

OPENING PRAYER

Scripture Reading

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called night. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. *Genesis 1:15-5,31*

Reflection

"Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air, amply spread around everywhere, question the beauty of the sky, question the ranks of the stars, question the sun making the day glorious with its bright beams, question the moon tempering the darkness of the following night with its shining rays, question the animals that move in the waters, that amble about on dry land, that fly in the air; their souls hidden, their bodies evident; the visible bodies needing to be controlled, the invisible souls controlling them; question all these things. They all answer you, 'Here we are, look; we're beautiful.' Their beauty is their confession. Who made these beautiful changeable things, if not one who is beautiful and unchangeable?"

St Augustine

Prayer

Father, you have created all things and uphold them by your all powerful Word.
Help us always to welcome your Word into our hearts and proclaim it with the whole of our lives.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. The Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament]

They are the story of God's relationship with the people he has chosen – and all their ups and downs!
It began with creation – God making Adam and Eve in God's own image.
Things go wrong – and so we sin in the Garden of Eden, in Cain and Abel, and in the Flood
Noah and his family survive and the rainbow is a sign of God's covenant with the people.

Things move on when God calls Abram, and renames him Abraham, the father of many peoples.
He shows his faith in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, who becomes the father of Esau and Jacob.
One of Jacob's sons is Joseph – and he helps God's people survive the great famine.

In Egypt the Hebrew people begin to suffer, and so Moses becomes the one who leads them out of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea, in the key event of the people's history, the Exodus.

Their journey through the desert lasted forty years. With God's help they came into the Promised Land.
Joshua led them into the land of milk and honey.
He was followed by a series of Judges who emerged from the people when decisions had to be made.

The Hebrew people looked around at other nations and liked the idea of being a kingdom.
Samuel anoints Saul as King who is succeeded by David, seen as the ideal king, yet a sinner.
Solomon follows, the builder of the Jerusalem Temple.
After his death the people divide into two kingdoms: Israel in the north, Judah in the south.

Israel does not last long.

A series of sinful kings follow, who do not listen to the challenge of the prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea. Assyria conquers the land, and the resulting intermarriage is the origin of Samaria.

That Judah likewise turns from God to idolatry is a problem. They build relationships with pagan nations. Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah all call the people back to the way of truth, but they fall again and again. The Babylonians take many into exile, and Ezekiel tries to keep the people true.
Once again they fall and the second deportation leaves Judea a barren wilderness.
It is the Persians who set the Jews free to return to Jerusalem where they rebuild the Temple.
God continues to call prophets.
Later-Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah continue to remind the people of God's faithfulness to his people

The Greeks become the dominating power after the Persians. They were followed by the Egyptians.
It is in this unsettled time that the Jewish independence fighters emerge in strength, especially the Maccabees. Eventually the Romans conquer the whole area and so the scene is set for a new era

All of this history is written up by many different people, in different styles
– history, prophetic writings, wisdom writings, prayer and praise, the stories of individuals.
Yet it is always God's word in human words.

Reflection exercise

The Old (*Hebrew*) Testament is fundamental to our Christian faith.
Is there a story, event, text that speaks to you in terms of your faith?
As a reader what challenges does it pose?

3. The Christian Scriptures [New Testament]

The Hebrew [Old] Testament is about the covenant relationship of God and God's people. At its heart is the experience of the Exodus when God set his people free. Despite all the times they turned from him they always related back to that one event which showed his faithfulness and they looked for the day when salvation would come.

It comes in Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, the Son of God.
His life, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension are the heart of the Christian [New] Testament.
God's people no longer needed mediators because Jesus speaks God's Word himself.

There is continuity between the two testaments, because they are integrally linked. As the last of the prophets John the Baptist points to Christ as the One who brings salvation. The New Testament authors often refer to the Hebrew Scriptures to show that Jesus is the fulfilment of all that God had promised.

The gospels set out in their different ways to give us the good news of Christ,
and invite us to reflect on our relationship with him.
The first three see him with a similar "eye" – the Synoptic gospels.
They share similar sources but write for different audiences.

MARK – *The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ the Son of God* [1: 1]

MATTHEW – *A genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham* [1:1]

LUKE – *Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have taken place among us exactly as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I, in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received* [1:1-4]

John is the last gospel to be written, and draws us into a different way of looking at the person of Jesus.
JOHN – *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* [1:1]

Reflection exercise

You are the only gospel someone may read today

or as Francis of Assisi said *Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.*

Which gospel or gospel passage is your favourite today?

Retell it to someone, explaining why it is important to you.

The relationship with Christ demands a whole new way of life as the book of Acts describes. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the apostles witness to Christ as the Saviour. The community grew through such preaching and began to spread beyond Jerusalem. Eventually missionaries, like Paul, take the message of Christ further afield to Jews and Gentiles. As the Church grows the apostles recognise that the Good News of Christ is for all people without distinction.

This leads us to the letters of the apostles. They help Christians to work out how to live out their relationship with Christ and one another in the societies within which they live. Paul addresses the needs of specific communities, local churches with whom he has a direct relationship. As well as offering guidance and teaching, the beginning and ending of his letters reveal the depth of his personal relationships.

The letters of the other apostles, Peter, James, Jude, John, are shorter, and often focus on a particular issue. The letter to the Hebrews stands alone as a intense theological meditation.

In the end the Christian community lives in hope for the coming of Christ and for a new heaven and a new earth as promised by the Saviour. The words of the Book of the Apocalypse sum up that hope:
The Spirit and the Bride say; "Come!"
The One who guarantees these revelations repeats his promise:
I shall indeed be with you soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. [22:17,20]



4. The Living Word

St John teaches that the Word became Flesh [John 1:14]. The Church helps us as Catholics to understand that the Word is a living Word, a Word that is made flesh in our experience of Church, of Liturgy, of Service, of Teaching. This has been expressed in many different ways throughout the history of the Church and continues in the present, so that the Scriptures become a reality for us.

God is the author of Sacred Scripture.

"The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.."

Still, the Christian faith is not a "religion of the book".

Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God,

"not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living".

If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, "open (our) minds to understand the Scriptures."

Catechism of the Catholic Church nn 105, 108

What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

"Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God" in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.

"The Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes".

Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith, the People of God as a whole never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine Revelation.

The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.

Catechism of the Catholic Church nn. 96-100

One of the ways in which the Church passes on the Scriptures is through the Lectionary. In the liturgical tradition specific passages are chosen in relationship to one another to help us appreciate Christ as the Incarnate Word, and to challenge the way in which we live that Word in practice.

Reflection exercise

Discuss what it means to say *THE WORD OF THE LORD*.

Why do we respond *THANKS BE TO GOD*?

5. A way of reflecting on Scripture - Lectio Divina

- Pope Benedict XVI said in a 2005 speech,
"I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of lectio divina:
the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer
brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking,
and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart."

The actual practice of **lectio divina** begins with a time of relaxation,
making oneself comfortable
and clearing the mind of mundane thoughts and cares.

- Four steps

Lectio –

Reading the Bible passage gently and slowly several times.
The passage itself is not as important as the savoring of each portion of the reading,
constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase
that somehow speaks to the practitioner.

Meditatio –

Reflecting on the text of the passage and thinking about how it applies to one's own life.
This is considered to be a very personal reading of the Scripture and very personal application.

Oratio –

Responding to the passage by opening the heart to God.
This is not primarily an intellectual exercise,
but is thought to be more of the beginning of a conversation with God.

Contemplatio –

Listening to God.
This is a freeing of oneself from one's own thoughts, both mundane and holy,
and hearing God talk to us.
Opening the mind, heart, and soul to the influence of God.

Some scripture passages for reflection – use the *Lectio* pattern....or any other method

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

Isaiah 55:10,11

For this Law that I enjoin on you today is not beyond your strength or beyond your reach. It is not in heaven, so that you need to wonder, "Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it down to us, so that we may hear it and keep it?" Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you need to wonder, "Who will cross the seas for us and bring it back to us, so that we may hear it and keep it?" No, the Word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance.

Deuteronomy 30:12-14

You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember who your teachers were, and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures - from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be holy. This is how anyone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work.

II Timothy 3:14-17

Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life - this is our subject. That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete.

I John 1:1-4

The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. *Hebrews 4:12*

Appendix : BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

E Charpentier	<i>How to read the New Testament</i> – SCM 1981
E Charpentier	<i>How to read the Old Testament</i> – SCM 1981
A Graffy	<i>Reading the New Testament</i> – CTS 2002
A Graffy	<i>Reading the Old Testament</i> – CTS 2002
CBCEW	<i>The Gift of Scripture</i> CTS 2005
Benedict XVI	<i>Verbum Domini – The Word of God Alive</i> 2010
CBCEW	<i>The Word of the Lord</i> CTS 2013

Books of the Bible in Canonical Order

USCCB

OLD TESTAMENT

• Genesis	▪ Tobit	▪ Ezekiel
• Exodus	▪ Judith	▪ Daniel
• Leviticus	▪ Esther	▪ Hosea
• Numbers	▪ 1 Maccabees	▪ Joel
• Deuteronomy	▪ 2 Maccabees	▪ Amos
• Joshua	▪ Job	▪ Obadiah
• Judges	▪ Psalms	▪ Jonah
• Ruth	▪ Proverbs	▪ Micah
• 1 Samuel	▪ Ecclesiastes	▪ Nahum
• 2 Samuel	▪ Song of Songs	▪ Habakkuk
• 1 Kings	▪ Wisdom	▪ Zephaniah
• 2 Kings	▪ Sirach	▪ Haggai
• 1 Chronicles	▪ Isaiah	▪ Zechariah
• 2 Chronicles	▪ Jeremiah	▪ Malachi
• Ezra	▪ Lamentations	
• Nehemiah	▪ Baruch	

NEW TESTAMENT

▪ Matthew	▪ Ephesians	▪ Hebrews
▪ Mark	▪ Philippians	▪ James
▪ Luke	▪ Colossians	▪ 1 Peter
▪ John	▪ 1 Thessalonians	▪ 2 Peter
▪ Acts	▪ 2 Thessalonians	▪ 1 John
▪ Romans	▪ 1 Timothy	▪ 2 John
▪ 1 Corinthians	▪ 2 Timothy	▪ 3 John
▪ 2 Corinthians	▪ Titus	▪ Jude
▪ Galatians	▪ Philemon	▪ Revelation



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II. The Word of God in our Liturgy

1. What is Liturgy?
2. The Word in Liturgy
3. Vatican II and the Word
4. The Liturgy of the Word
5. Scripture in the Liturgy of the Word – the Lectionary
6. What did you make of this / last Sunday's readings?
7. Reflection - Verbum Domini
8. Reflection – The Lector's Ministry
9. Reflection – The Lectionary

Opening Prayer

Scripture

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."
Jeremiah 1:4-10

Reflection

It is especially necessary that listening to the Word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *Lectio Divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives. To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be "servants of the word" ...this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium.

Pope Saint John Paul II (NMI nn.39,40)

Prayer

Father, you have called us to be ministers of your Word.

Help us always to welcome your Word into our hearts and proclaim it with the whole of our lives.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

1. What is Liturgy?

Liturgy is the worship of God offered by the Church to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. In the liturgy the people engage in the works of God.

The word "liturgy" originally meant a "public work" or a "service in the name of/on behalf of the people". In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in "the work of God". Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church.

In the New Testament the word "liturgy" refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity. In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbour.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1069, 1070

2. The Word in Liturgy

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone glorified him.

He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.'

Luke 4:14-21

Now that very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognising him..... Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.....Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

Luke 24 :13-16, 25-27, 32

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves . . .and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.

Justin Martyr AD 155

Reflection

What do these passages say to you about the Word of God and what it means for you as a reader?

3. Vatican II and the Word

“The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word. In this way a more representative part of the sacred scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years.” *Sacrosanctum Concilium n.51*

“Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance for the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from it that lessons are read and explained in the homily and psalms are sung. It is from the scriptures that the prayers, collects and hymns draw their inspiration and their force and that actions and signs derive their meaning. Hence in order to achieve the restoration, progress and adaptation of the sacred liturgy it is essential to promote that sweet and living love for sacred scripture to which venerable tradition of Eastern and Western rites gives testimony.” *Sacrosanctum Concilium n.24*

4. The Liturgy of the Word

from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal [2010]

I. The General Structure of the Mass

27. At Mass or the Lord’s Supper the People of God is called together, with a Priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or Eucharistic Sacrifice. In an outstanding way there applies to such a local gathering of the holy Church the promise of Christ: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst” (Mt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and uninterruptedly under the Eucharistic species.

28. The Mass consists in some sense of two parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these being so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship. For in the Mass is spread the table both of God’s Word and of the Body of Christ, and from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed. There are also certain rites that open and conclude the celebration.

II. The Different Elements of the Mass

Reading and Explaining the Word of God

29. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel.

Therefore, the readings from the Word of God are to be listened to reverently by everyone, for they are an element of the greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although in the readings from Sacred Scripture the Word of God is addressed to all people of whatever era and is understandable to them, a fuller understanding and a greater efficaciousness of the word is nevertheless fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, by the Homily, as part of the liturgical action.

B) The Liturgy of the Word

55. The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. As for the Homily, the Profession of Faith, and the Universal Prayer, they develop and conclude it. For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful. By silence and by singing, the people make this divine word their own, and affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith; finally, having been nourished by the divine word, the people pour out their petitions by means of the Universal Prayer for the needs of the whole Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

Silence

56. The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favour meditation, and so any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided. In the course of it, brief periods of silence are also appropriate, accommodated to the assembled congregation; by means of these, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily.

Reflection		
THE LITURGY OF THE WORD		
Structure	What is the minister doing?	What are the people doing?
First Reading		
Responsorial Psalm		
Second Reading		
Gospel Acclamation		
GOSPEL		
Homily		
Profession of Faith		
Intercessions		

5. Scripture in the Liturgy of the Word – the Lectionary

Holy Church celebrates the saving work of Christ on prescribed days in the course of the year with sacred remembrance. Each week, on the day called the Lord’s Day, she commemorates the Resurrection of the Lord, which she also celebrates once a year in the great Paschal Solemnity, together with his blessed Passion. In fact, throughout the course of the year the Church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ and observes the birthdays of the Saints.

Universal Norms for Liturgical Year n.1

The present Order of Readings for Mass, then, is an arrangement of biblical readings that provides the faithful with a knowledge of the whole of God’s word, in a pattern suited to the purpose. Throughout the liturgical year, but above all during the seasons of Easter, Lent, and Advent, the choice and sequence of readings are aimed at giving the faithful an ever-deepening perception of the faith they profess and of the history of salvation. Accordingly, the Order of Readings corresponds to the requirements and interests of the Christian people.....The Order of Readings for Mass aptly presents from Scripture the principal deeds and words belonging to the history of salvation. As its many phases and events are recalled in the liturgy of the word, the faithful will come to see that the history of salvation is contained here and now in the representation of Christ’s paschal mystery celebrated through the Eucharist.

Introduction to the Lectionary nn 60,61

6. What did you make of this / last Sunday's readings: here – First Sunday of Advent A
Please consider using the readings of a Sunday close to the session as well if you wish

- read the gospel first
- what is it about?
- read the first reading
- how does it connect with the gospel?
- look at the psalm
- how does it amplify the connections?
- does the second reading help the connection or has it something else to say?

First Reading Isaiah 2:1-5 - *Let us walk in the light of the Lord*

In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of the Lord shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. All the nations will stream to it, peoples without number will come to it; and they will say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths; since the Law will go out from Zion, and the oracle of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war. O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Psalm 121 - I REJOICED WHEN I HEARD THEM SAY: LET US GO TO GOD'S HOUSE!

I rejoiced when I heard them say: "Let us go to God's house!"
And now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord.
For Israel's law it is, there to praise the Lord's name.
There were set the thrones of judgement of the house of David.

For the peace of Jerusalem pray: "Peace be in your homes!
May peace reign in your walls, in your palaces, peace!"
For the love of my brethren and friends I say: "Peace upon you!"
For love of the house of the Lord I will ask for your good.

Second Reading Romans 13:11-14 *"The Time" has come - you must wake up now*

You know 'the time' has come: you must wake up now: our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted. The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon - let us give up all the things we prefer to do under the cover of the dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light. Let us live decently as people do in the daytime: no drunken orgies, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ

Gospel Acclamation - ALLELUIA *Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.*

Gospel - Matthew (24:37-44) - *Stay awake*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left.

'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

VERBUM DOMINI nn 57, 58

Pope Benedict XVI, 2010

Sacred Scripture and the Lectionary

In stressing the bond between word and Eucharist, the Synod also rightly wanted to call attention to certain aspects of the celebration which concern the service of the word. In the first place I wish to mention the importance of the Lectionary. The reform called for by the Second Vatican Council has borne fruit in a richer access to sacred Scripture, which is now offered in abundance, especially at Sunday Mass. The present structure of the Lectionary not only presents the more important texts of Scripture with some frequency, but also helps us to understand the unity of God's plan thanks to the interplay of the Old and New Testament readings, an interplay "in which Christ is the central figure, commemorated in his paschal mystery". Any remaining difficulties in seeing the relationship between those readings should be approached in the light of canonical interpretation, that is to say, by referring to the inherent unity of the Bible as a whole. Wherever necessary, the competent offices and groups can make provision for publications aimed at bringing out the interconnection of the Lectionary readings, all of which are to be proclaimed to the liturgical assembly as called for by the liturgy of the day. Other problems or difficulties should be brought to the attention of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Nor should we overlook the fact that the current Lectionary of the Latin rite has ecumenical significance, since it is used and valued also by communities not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. The issue of the Lectionary presents itself differently in the liturgies of the Eastern Catholic Churches; the Synod requested that this issue be "examined authoritatively", in accordance with the proper tradition and competences of the *sui iuris* Churches, likewise taking into account the ecumenical context.

Proclamation of the word and the ministry of Reader

The Synod on the Eucharist had already called for greater care to be taken in the proclamation of the word of God. As is known, while the Gospel is proclaimed by a priest or deacon, in the Latin tradition the first and second readings are proclaimed by an appointed reader, whether a man or a woman. I would like to echo the Synod Fathers who once more stressed the need for the adequate training of those who exercise the *munus* of reader in liturgical celebrations, and particularly those who exercise the ministry of Reader, which in the Latin rite is, as such, a lay ministry. All those entrusted with this office, even those not instituted in the ministry of Reader, should be truly suitable and carefully trained. This training should be biblical and liturgical, as well as technical: "The purpose of their biblical formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith central point of the revealed message. The liturgical formation ought to equip readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the liturgy of the word and the significance of its connection with the liturgy of the Eucharist. The technical preparation should make the readers skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment."

8. Reflection - The Lector's Ministry

- Yours is a share in the Lord's Spirit who opens our hearts to God's holy word.
- Yours is the task of telling our family story, the story of salvation.
- Yours is to proclaim the true and saving word of God.
- You are the messenger of God's love for us.
- Your task is to proclaim that word, which challenges, confronts and captures our hearts.
- You proclaim a word that heals and comforts and consoles.
- Yours is the ministry of the table of God's word, which feeds the hungers and the longing of our hearts for truth.
- Yours is to offer the story of the "great things the Lord has done for us", that we might turn to the table of Eucharist with good cause to give thanks and praise.
- Yours is nothing less than the ministry of the Lord's voice calling out in the midst of God's people.
- Come to your work from your personal prayer, praying that the Spirit will open your heart to what you proclaim. Prepare the word which is yours to speak: study the scriptures, understand the passage, let it dwell deep within you. Come to your work in awesome reverence of the word you proclaim: it is the *Lord's* word. Come to your ministry as one judged and saved by the word you speak. Anyone can read the scriptures in public; only the believer can proclaim them.
- Approach the ambo, the table of the Lord's word, as you would the Lord himself: with reverence and awe. Handle the book of the Lord's word with great care: it is a tabernacle of the Lord's presence. Let your eyes fall often on the faces of the assembly: they are the body of the Lord whose word you proclaim.
- Let the Lord's peace settle in your heart, that your voice may be clear and steady.
- Let your voice echo the sound of the word, with conviction, with gentleness, with strength, and with wonder. Remember that the story you tell is filled with a drama you need not supply, but must always convey. Like the prophet, you will sometimes proclaim what no one wants to hear; remember always your own need to hear the hard saying, and never imagine that your ministry places you above what you proclaim.
- If you are the best of the parish lectors, be gentle in helping others to improve.
- If you are the least of the parish lectors, seek out that help which others can give.
- If you do not know how well you read – ask: be grateful for constructive criticism and humbled by any praise you receive.
- Every lector wants to read at the Easter Vigil but not all will be assigned: be patient in waiting your turn and nourished by the word that others proclaim.
- Let no minister of the word think that there is nothing left to learn: another commentary and another workshop cannot but help the open mind and heart.
- When your brothers and sisters praise and thank you for your work, take delight in the word they have heard and rejoice in the work the Lord has accomplished through you.
- Be faithful in the work you do, for through it the Lord saves his people.

adapted from Austin Fleming 'Preparing for Liturgy' The Pastoral Press, Washington D.C. 1985

9. Reflection - The Lectionary

R Cooper	<i>The Word of God B – NORES 1996</i>
R Cooper	<i>The Word of God C – NORES 1997</i>
R Cooper	<i>The Word of God A – NORES 2001</i>
T O'Loughlin	<i>Making the Most of the Lectionary SPCK 2012</i>
T O'Loughlin	<i>Explaining the Lectionary for Readers Columba 2008</i>
T O'Loughlin	<i>Sunday Mass Readings CTS 2010</i>
G Ramshaw	<i>A Three Year Banquet Augsburg Fortress 2004</i>

General Structure of the Sunday Lectionary

Easter Time - Gospel	Easter Time – First & Second Reading
Year A – Matthew / John / Luke / John++++	Year A - Acts and I Peter
Year B – Mark / John / Luke / John++++	Year B - Acts and I John
Year C – Luke / John ++++++	Year C - Acts and Revelation

Lent - Gospel	Lent – First & Second Reading
Year A – Matthew / John / Matthew	Old Testament – History of Salvation Letters of the Apostles – to fit and connect the gospel and Old Testament readings
Year B – Mark / John	
Year C – Luke	

Advent - Gospel	Advent – First & Second Reading
Year A – Matthew	Old Testament – Messianic prophecies Letters of the apostles – exhortations and proclamations for the Advent theme
Year B – Mark / John / Luke	
Year C – Luke	

Ordinary Time - Gospel	Ordinary Time - Second Reading
Year A - Matthew	I Corinthians 1-4, Romans Philippians, I Thessalonians
Year B – Mark/John	I Corinthians 6-11, II Corinthians Ephesians, James, Hebrew 2-10
Year C - Luke	I Corinthians 12-15, Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews 11,12, Philemon, I & II Timothy II Thessalonians



Diocese of Northampton
LITURGY COMMISSION
Liturgical Formation

MINISTERS of the WORD of GOD
a Reflection Course

- I. How we understand God's Word as Catholics
- II. The Word of God in our Liturgy
- III. How we proclaim the Word

The God Who Speaks:
2020 A Year of the Word
celebrating, living and
sharing God's word



III. How we proclaim the Word

1. The ministry of Reader
2. A Vision for the Liturgy of the Word
3. May the Lord be in my head, in my heart, on my lips
4. Blessing of a Lectern
5. Blessing of Readers
6. Touchstones for Readers
7. Prayerful Reading of the Scriptures
8. Pope Francis on the Liturgy of the Word

Opening Prayer

Scripture - There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 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.

John 1:6-14

Reflection

God has created me to do Him some definite service
He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another
I have my mission
I may never know it in this life but I shall be told it in the next
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons
He has not created me for naught
I shall do good - I shall do His work
I shall be an angel of peace
a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments
Therefore I will trust Him...

Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman

Prayer

Father, you have sent us to witness to your Son Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.
Help us always to welcome your Word into our hearts and proclaim it with the whole of our lives.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

1. The Ministry of Reader

The passage below is taken from a version of the "Rite for the Institution of Readers" and it demonstrates the value the church places on this ministry. Although this rite was intended for use in the formal institution of men into the ministry of lector prior to ordination to the diaconate, it has been used in modified form to commission both men and women as readers, and it speaks powerfully of the importance of the ministry of the Word.

Through His Son, God has revealed the mystery of salvation and brought it to fulfilment. Jesus Christ made all things known to us, and then entrusted His Church with the mission of preaching the Gospel to the whole world.

As readers and bearers of God's Word, you will assist in this mission; you will be given a responsibility in the service of faith which is rooted in the Word of God. You will proclaim that Word in the liturgical assembly. You will bring the message of salvation to those who have not yet received it. Thus, with your help, men and women will come to know God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and so be able to reach eternal life.

In proclaiming God's Word to others, accept it yourself in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Meditate on it constantly, so that each day you will have a deeper love of the Scriptures, and in all you say and do show forth to the world our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

2. A Vision for the Liturgy of the Word

All the readers of Scripture know what they are there to do. They know that these readings could be read privately by each individual, but that this public reading is quite different. For two years now there have been no booklets for the assembly to follow the reading, although by the front doors there are Sunday Missals for the hearing impaired and for those whose language is different from the one used at this Mass. The assembly gives all its attention to the lector.

These lectors have been struggling with the assigned Scripture for the past few days. Their manner and understanding may vary, but they open this Lectionary and read knowing that this church is full of people hungry for the Word of God.

The lectors have taken the time to hear anew old words, to let the images of Scripture reflect against and mingle with their lives. Each has found something to cherish in a reading, something to be passionate about. But they also know how to communicate their passion without calling attention to themselves. The assembly is hearing God's Word. You can tell that the main activity going on during these readings is good listening. And what a treasure that is! The liturgy -- God's word proclaimed and God's word listened to -- is being carried by the assembly and they mean it when they say, "Thanks be to God." Every Sunday the Sacred Scriptures have been opened and read aloud. God's Word proclaimed and listened to will be the foundation for all else that this Church does.

*Gather Faithfully Together - A Guide for Sunday Mass
Cardinal Roger Mahony - Archbishop of Los Angeles*

3. May the Lord be in my head, in my heart, on my lips

Your role in the Liturgy of the Word is crucial.

It is essential that you approach it with sincerity and firm commitment.

We should always prepare our reading in three ways –

- with our head to understand
- with our heart in prayer
- on our lips so that the Word is heard.

In the week before

- Know which reading[s] is/are yours from a Sunday missal or other text
- Take time to read and familiarise yourself with it/them
- Check any issues with pronunciation
- Read the text aloud with attention to meaning, structure and diction
- Be aware of the pace of the reading, pauses for silence.

What does the text mean to you?

- Take time to reflect upon the text
- Does any word/phrase speak to you or your parish community?
- Include the readings in your prayer life during the week.

Making more of the reading

- If you can read the passages of Scripture preceding and following your reading it may help you to better understand its context
- How do the other readings in the Liturgy of the Word connect with this passage?
- Use any resources and commentaries available to help you engage with the text more fully.

On the day

- Arrive in good time
- Check that the Lectionary has been put out, open at the readings for the day
- Always treat the Lectionary with care and reverence for what we believe is revealed and reflected explicitly in what we do
- Be clear on the local customs for approaching and leaving the sanctuary, e.g. where there are two readers and a psalmist they approach the sanctuary together before the first reading, bow to the altar as the icon of Christ, unless the bishop is present when they bow to him. They then take their seats on the sanctuary. They leave and bow together at the end of the second reading or during the gospel acclamation.
- Make sure that your appearance does not distract from the reading
- Liaise with other readers and musicians as necessary
- Check the amplification if it is used.

During the Liturgy of the Word

- Approach the Ambo when the Collect Prayer is over
- Bow to the altar
- At the Ambo, take a moment to prepare yourself to read
- Read the title, just “A reading from”. Do not say First or Second Reading
- Do not read the heading, the text in italics.
- Look at the people from time to time.
- Have a definite pause before “The word of the Lord”. [Remember we have dropped *This is ..*]

When the psalm is not sung

- Simply read the response. Do not say : “The response is ...”
- The psalm verses are poetry and may need to be read in a different way to the readings.
- By slowing down and looking up during the last line the people will know to reply with the response.

Gospel Acclamation

- A pause follows the second reading
- When the priest stands or the priest/deacon picks up the gospel book the acclamation begins
- If the verse is read by a lector they leave the ambo as soon as it is finished to allow the priest/deacon to come to the ambo.

Intercessions

- Move when the Creed is concluded
- The priest leads the Invitation to prayer
- Announce the intentions – these are invitations to the people to pray
- Always give a clear pause for silent prayer before the response is invited
- Remain at the Ambo until the priest has concluded the final prayer.

4. Prayer of Blessing of a New Lectern, Book of Blessings, ICEL

O God,
who have called us out of darkness into your own wonderful light,
we owe you our thanks at all times.
You satisfy the hunger in our hearts
with the sweet nourishment of your word.
When we gather in this church
you remind us again and again of your wondrous words and works.
We pray that in this church we may listen to the voice of your Son
so that, responding to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
we may not be hearers only but doers of your word.

Grant that those who proclaim your message from this lectern
may show us how to direct our lives,
so that we will walk in the ways of Christ,
following him faithfully
until we reach eternal life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

5. Blessing of Readers

Arrange the blessing of Readers at the Sunday Mass where they proclaim the Word of God. It is best to do this annually so that individuals see their ministry as something to which they are called by the local community, rather than seeing it as a permanent right. Call the Readers to the front of the Church after the Collect. Use the rite (blessing) below, giving each reader to be commissioned or re-commissioned a copy of the Rite that follows. This could be in the form of a prayer card for them to keep as a reminder of their ministry and the duration of the commissioning.

Celebrant: The Word of God, proclaimed in sacred scripture, enlightens our minds and hearts.

When the Scriptures are read in the liturgical assembly, God speaks to us and calls us to respond in faith and love.

The ministry of reader, then, is important to the life of the Church, for the reader proclaims God's living word.

We ask God to bless these readers and all of us who will soon listen to the Word of God.¹

Celebrant: Are you resolved to prepare diligently to proclaim the Word of God to the people and to lead them in intercession? *Reader:* I am.

Celebrant: Are you resolved to pattern your life on the Word of God that you proclaim and so serve to build up the Church? *Reader:* I am.

Celebrant: Everlasting God, when he read in the synagogue at Nazareth, your Son proclaimed the good news of salvation for which he would give up his life. Bless + these readers.

As they proclaim your words of life, strengthen their faith that they may read with conviction and boldness and put into practice what they read.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Blessing from the Rite of a Dedication of a Church

May the word of God always be heard in this place,
as it unfolds the mystery of Christ before you
and achieves your salvation within the Church

Used the first time the Word of God is proclaimed at a Church's Dedication

Blessing for Readers at any Mass in the Ambrosian Rite

May the Word of God enlighten us and show us the way of salvation

¹ *this and the prayer of blessing ("Everlasting God...") come from the Book of Blessings*

6. Touchstones for Readers

- Read the Bible privately on a regular basis. Engage in Bible study, if there is any opportunity for it. Read carefully the introductions to the various biblical books and any other useful guides. Get to know St. Paul, the evangelist Matthew and the prophet Jeremiah so well that you can anticipate the way they think. In that way, neither they nor any other biblical writer can catch you unaware.
- Be aware of the importance of your service to your fellow worshippers. Resolve to read so well that they will *not lose a syllable of the Word of God*. Your proclamation of God's word may prove the chief nourishment your fellow worshippers will receive.
- Never read publicly what you have not first read privately. Even the most seasoned reader can be caught off guard by a passage that (s)he has not seen recently, whether because of content, unexpected punctuation or the lack of it, or unfamiliar proper nouns.
- Discover, in your previous preparation, where the "centre of gravity" lies in each successive sentence. Let the stress in your voice fall on that which the author intends chiefly to affirm, to deny, or to call into question.
- If you are an inexperienced public reader you should read beforehand to a competent critic. Find a person who knows how to read publicly and who will tell you the truth.
- Verbs are more important than adverbs; nouns are more important than adjectives. Let your stress fall on them, not their helpers. Prepositions, while they should always be heard, should not always be stressed.
- Approach the place from which you will read with modest but confident bearing, as if something important were about to happen. Indeed, it is.
- Do not swallow the word with which a sentence ends. If you do, the listener, having heard every other word, can then lose all. Do not read over dramatically. Not even a good actor does that. Read intelligently, animatedly, and when indicated, conversationally. Read slowly and clearly but not so deliberately that all flow is destroyed. A piece of spoken prose is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Different materials require different treatment. Read Jesus' stories as if you were telling a story. Read the theological part of a letter of Paul as if you were conducting an argument. Read Sirach or Wisdom or much of Matthew so as to bring out the individual wise sayings of which those writings are composed.
- After having concluded, pause. Then say, in a matter-of-fact-tone, "The word of the Lord."

(Developed from Touchstone for Liturgical Ministers, Washington, 1978)

7. Prayerful Reading of the Scriptures

Our listening to the Word is to be a listening with our whole self, mind and heart and soul. Readers should be disciples of Christ, who like Mary are prepared to sit down at the Lord's feet and listen to Christ speaking (Luke 10:39). The ancient practice of Divine Reading of the Scriptures, *Lectio Divina*, gives us a method with which we can prayerfully listen to the Word of God with our whole self. There are many popular descriptions of how to engage in this process, a helpful leaflet from the Liturgy Office is available from: www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Scripture/Lectio-Divina.pdf Here are three passages which you may like to use for prayerful reading and reflection:

“Accordingly, on the first day of the seventh month, the priest Ezra brought the Law before the assembly, consisting of men, women and all those old enough to understand. In the square in front of the Water Gate, in the presence of the men and women, and of those old enough to understand, he read from the book from dawn till noon; all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden dais erected for the purpose ... In full view of all the people -- since he stood higher than them all -- Ezra opened the book; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, 'Amen! Amen!', then they bowed down and, face to the ground, prostrated themselves before the Lord. Ezra read from the book of the Law of God, translating and giving the sense; so the reading was understood. Then His Excellency Nehemiah and the priest-scribe Ezra and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people, 'Today is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not be mournful, do not weep.' For the people were all in tears as they listened to the words of the Law. He then said, 'You may go; eat what is rich, drink what is sweet and send a helping to the man who has nothing prepared. For today is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad: the joy of the Lord is your stronghold.’”

Nehemiah 8:2-6,8-10

“Something which has existed since the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands, the Word of life - this is our theme. That life was made visible; we saw it and are giving our testimony, declaring to you the eternal life, which was present to the Father and has been revealed to us. We are declaring to you what we have seen and heard, so that you too may share our life. Our life is shared with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

1 John 1:1-3

“The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgement on secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing is hidden from him; everything is uncovered and stretched fully open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.”

Hebrews 4:12-13

“.. In the Liturgy of the Word ... we gather to listen to what God has done and still intends to do for us. It’s an experience that happens “directly” and not by having heard, because “when Sacred Scripture is read in Church, God Himself speaks to His people and Christ, present in the Word, proclaims the Gospel” When the Word of God is read in the Bible — the First Reading, the Second, the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel – we must listen, open our heart, because it’s God Himself who is speaking to us, and we must not think of other things or talk about other things.

The pages of the Bible cease to be a writing to become living word pronounced by God. It’s God that, through the person that reads, speaks to us and questions us, who listen with faith. The Spirit “who has spoken through the prophets” and has inspired the sacred authors, acts so that “the Word of God truly operates in hearts what He makes resound in ears”. However, to listen to the Word of God it’s necessary to have an open heart to receive the word in the heart. God speaks and we listen to Him, to then put into practice what we have heard....

It is, in fact, a question of life, as the incisive expression well reminds that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”, the life that the Word of God gives us. In this connection, we speak of the Liturgy of the Word as the “table” that the Lord prepares to feed our spiritual life. That of the Liturgy is an abundant table, which draws widely from the treasures of the Bible be it of the Old or of the New Testament, because in them the Church proclaims the one and the same mystery of Christ.

The liturgical proclamation of the same Readings, with the songs deduced from Sacred Scripture, expresses and fosters ecclesial communion, accompanying the path of each and all. It’s necessary to find good readers! – those that are able to read, not those that read, mangling the words and nothing is understood. They must prepare themselves and try before the Mass to read well. And this creates a receptive atmosphere of silence.

It’s certainly not enough to listen with the ears, without receiving in the heart the seed of the divine Word, enabling it to bear fruit. Let us remember the parable of the sower and the different results according to the different types of soil. The action of the Spirit, which renders the response effective, is in need of hearts that allow themselves to be worked and cultivated, so that what is heard at Mass passes in daily life, in keeping with the Apostle James’ admonition: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”. The Word of God makes a path within us. We hear it with the ears and it passes to the heart. It doesn’t stay in the ears; it must go to the heart, and from the heart it passes to the hands, to good works. This is the course that the Word of God follows: from the ears to the heart to the hands. Let us learn these things. Thank you! “