

MORE THAN JUST LISTENING

On this Word of God Sunday we are invited to reverence the gift of listening and the desire of God to speak to us. This excerpt comes from the website of the Catholic Bishops .

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16)

On September 30, 2019, on the liturgical memorial of St. Jerome, Pope Francis announced that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time would be celebrated as the Sunday of the Word of God. The inspiring text of his Apostolic Letter, “Aperuit illis: Instituting the Sunday of the Word of God” beautifully explains the relationship between the Risen Lord, the community of believers and sacred Scripture as essential to our identity as Christians.

Here is a small excerpt from the Holy Father’s Apostolic Letter which breaks open the relationship between the Word of God and the Eucharist:

Sacred Scripture and the Sacraments are thus inseparable. When the Sacraments are introduced and illumined by God’s word, they become ever more clearly the goal of a process whereby Christ opens our minds and hearts to acknowledge His saving work. We should always keep in mind the teaching found in the Book of Revelation: the Lord is standing at the door and knocking. If anyone should hear His voice and open for Him, He will come in and eat with them (cf. 3:20). Christ Jesus is knocking at our door in the words of sacred Scripture. If we hear His voice and open the doors of our minds and hearts, then He will enter our lives and remain ever with us.”

And in the Holy Father’s conclusion, he writes, “May the Sunday of the Word of God help His people to grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the sacred Scriptures. For as the sacred author taught of old: “This word is very near to you: it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance” (Dt 30:14).

It is up to us to do our part to open the door of our minds and hearts to this precious gift.



Fr John

THE AMPLIFICATION OF THE PROCLAMATION

Sound resonates throughout our planet. Those sounds can be very influential. In the past decade the influence of music and how we connect with it has changed. Music outlets have gone from vinyl to cassette to compact disc back to vinyl. Different apps can organize playlists and young influencers use songs in their Tik Tok videos. It is amazing how the outlets have changed, yet the need for sound and words remains a thirst in our very being. Lyrics from certain songs allow for the doorway to be vast and wide for interpretation. U2 can sing "let me in the sound," while Simon and Garfunkel can invite us to the "sounds of silence." What a backdrop of contrast and paradox for us to hear and listen to Jesus in the synagogue and ask, "How do we hear this? " Jesus will say this Scripture is fulfilled in our hearing.

All eyes are on Jesus as He takes the scroll and reads the words of Isaiah as they become a present-day proclamation. He lets them know it is a year of favor; the blind will see, those imprisoned will find freedom and the poor will find happiness. As all eyes rest on Him, He tells them and tells us, it is now fulfilled in their hearing. How is this proclamation amplified in such a way that it caught everyone's attention? How can we give this passage the power it deserves? All of us on different spiritual levels need new sight, need to be freed from what imprisons us and need to look at the poverty within us as good news. All of us need to embrace this year, this day, this moment as an experience of favor from our God. In the mess of the world our thirst has not changed, yet what we amplify defines us. To amplify this message is to sit in the assembly with awe knowing fulfillment has just happened because Jesus has spoken these words to us today, new and alive. How do we carry this power past the exit of the church building into the vehicle that brought us here? We are defined by what we amplify.

I often imagine what it must have been like in that synagogue. I often sit in an empty church or in an empty chapel to allow the sound of God's proclamation to resonate again and again into the passage from my ears to my brain and from my brain to my heart. The amplification of the proclamation happens when we thirst for the right sound. We are invited today in this moment to let the sound of God be the loudest, the strongest and the one we truly hear. Fulfillment will come in its hearing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fr. John".

Fr. John