

# Resources For the Sunday of the Word of God



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)  
21<sup>st</sup> January 2024



In September 2019, Pope Francis instituted the celebration of Word of God Sunday in the apostolic letter *Aperuit Illis*. The letter encourages ‘the celebration, study and dissemination’ of the Word of God. Devoting a specific Sunday of the liturgical year to the word of God can enable the Church to experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world.” (*Aperuit Illis* 2)

The following resources may assist parishes in celebrating Word of God Sunday:

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Additional resources are available on the Diocesan website:  
[www.dioceseofmeath.ie/word-of-god](http://www.dioceseofmeath.ie/word-of-god)

- Weekly Resource on the Sacred Scripture
- Pastoral Suggestions for Word of God Sunday
- Blessing of Bibles
- How to Use the Bible
- The Lector at Mass
- Liturgical & Pastoral Resources – Dicastery for Evangelisation
- Prayers of the Faithful for Word of God Sunday
- Fruitful Reading of Scripture
- The Art of Lectio Divina
- Commissioning Ministers of the Word
- Papal Documents on Sacred Scripture

## Word of God Sunday Prayers of the Faithful (I)

**Celebrant:** Having been enlightened by God's Word, let us bring our needs before the Author of all Truth:

1. For the Church, that we may continue to respond to the word of God which is proclaimed in our midst. **Lord, hear us.**
2. For all who listen as the Scriptures are proclaimed, that God's word may find in them a fruitful field. **Lord, hear us.**
3. For those who have not heard the message of Christ, that we may be willing to bring them the good news of salvation. **Lord, hear us.**
4. For our Ministers of the Word, that with deep faith, conviction and confident voice they may announce God's saving word. **Lord, hear us.**
5. That legislators and judges may be guided by the Scriptures to promote just laws and compassionate policies. **Lord, hear us.**
6. For priests, deacons, lectors, cantors, and catechists and all who bring God's Word to others. **Lord, hear us.**
7. For our Catholic schools, where children are formed and inspired by the Word of God. **Lord, hear us.**
8. For those who suffer from illness and for those who care for them. **Lord, hear us.**
9. For those who have died, now at peace in the radiance of God's light. **Lord, hear us.**

**Celebrant:** God of eternal love and light, You have given us Jesus as your incarnate Word, hear our humble prayers and grant us the grace and courage to proclaim your Gospel. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Word of God Sunday

### Prayers of the Faithful (II)

**Celebrant:** Having heard God's life-giving Word on this Day of the Lord, let us be open now to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we pray for the needs of the Church, the world and our local community.

1. We pray for all servants of God's Word in the Church: our Holy Father, Pope Francis, all bishops, priests, deacons and ministers; may they always promote the proclamation of the Gospel and the practice of Christian virtue in their ministries. **Lord, hear us.**
2. We pray for all leaders in government and the legal profession, especially those who solemnly swear on God's Word to speak the truth from their heart: that their words and example will inspire others towards honesty and integrity of life. **Lord, hear us.**
3. We pray for all who research, teach, and publish God's Word in our world: that their study, formation and resources will be fruitful in helping more people to know, love and serve the Lord. **Lord, hear us.**
4. We pray for all who proclaim and preach the Word of God in our communities: that they will always treasure the opportunity to be formed by God's Word and to use their gifts to bring this Word to life in the liturgy and in the lives of those close to them. **Lord, hear us.**
5. We pray for all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: that they will never lose hope in God but place their trust in him, and find comfort, consolation, and healing in the words of his Son. **Lord, hear us.**
6. We pray for all who have died recently or whose anniversaries of death occur around this time, especially N. \_\_\_\_\_: that they will rest in the peace of Christ and rise in glory on the last day. **Lord, hear us.**

**Celebrant:** Gracious and loving God, source of all wisdom and love, we ask you to hear the prayers we make this day in response to your life-giving Word. We make these prayers through Our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## Music Suggestions to Accompany Word of God Sunday

Title	Text/Tune	Source
A Mighty Fortress is our God	Luther/ Bach	GIA
A Voice Cries Out	Joncas	GIA
A Year of God's Favor	Dufner/St. Denio	GIA
All the Earth	Deiss	WLP
Amazing Grace	Newton	VARIOUS
As the Bread of Life is Broken	Chepponis/Thaxted	GIA
As We Gather at Your Table	Daw/Moore	GIA
Blessed Jesus, at your Word	Winkworth/Bach	OCP
Fresh as the Morning	Murray/Alonso	GIA
God has Spoken by His Prophets	Briggs	GIA
God is Still Speaking	Haugen	GIA
God Sends Us Forth	Alonso	GIA
God, Whose Purpose is to Kindle	Luke 12:49/Trueblood	GIA
In This Place Your Word is Planted	Dufner/Stuttgart	GIA
Is There a Word from the Lord?	Burleigh	GIA
Lord, Your Almighty Word	Marriott/Giardini	WLP
Lord, to Whom Shall We Go?	Joncas	OCP
Love is His Word	Connaughton/Hampton	WLP
Many and Great	Manalo	OCP
Moved by the Gospel, Let us Move	Duck/Williams	GIA
O God of Every Nation	Reid/Bach	GIA
O Word of God	Manalo	OCP
On the Journey to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35/Haugen	GIA
Order My Steps	Burleigh/Hobbs	GIA
Praise to You, O Christ our Saviour	Farrell	OCP
Words of Everlasting Life	Abbey Psalms/Alonso	OCP
Lord, You have the Words	Joncas	OCP
Your Words, Lord, are Spirit and Life	Hurd	OCP
All the Ends of the Earth	ICEL/Beall or Marcgionda	WLP
Rain Down	Ps. 33/Cortez	GIA
Sent Forth By God's Blessing	Westendorf/Trad. Welsh	WLP
Take and Eat	Quinn/Joncas	GIA
We Sing the Mighty Power of God	Watts/Mozart	WLP
Word of God	Farrell	OCP
Your Words are Spirit and Life	Farrell	OCP

(Source: Diocese of Cleveland – Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, Washington DC)

## Quotes from *Aperuit Illis*

*“He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”, Lk 24:45*

These are suitable for parish bulletins to maintain a focus on the word of God over coming weeks.

The relationship between the Risen Lord, the community of believers and sacred Scripture is essential to our identity as Christians. Without the Lord who opens our minds to them, it is impossible to understand the Scriptures in depth. Yet the contrary is equally true: without the Scriptures, the events of the mission of Jesus and of his Church in this world would remain incomprehensible. Hence, Saint Jerome could rightly claim: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” (*Aperuit Illis* #1)

The Bible cannot be just the heritage of some, much less a collection of books for the benefit of a privileged few. It belongs above all to those called to hear its message and to recognize themselves in its words. At times, there can be a tendency to monopolize the sacred text by restricting it to certain circles or to select groups. It cannot be that way. The Bible is the book of the Lord’s people, who, in listening to it, move from dispersion and division towards unity. The word of God unites believers and makes them one people. (*Aperuit Illis* #4)

The Bible, as sacred Scripture, thus speaks of Christ and proclaims him as the one who had to endure suffering and then enter into his glory (cf. v. 26). Not simply a part, but the whole of Scripture speaks of Christ. Apart from the Scriptures, his death and resurrection cannot be rightly understood. That is why one of the most ancient confessions of faith stressed that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas” (1Cor15:3-5). Since the Scriptures everywhere speak of Christ, they enable us to believe that his death and resurrection are not myth but history, and are central to the faith of his disciples. (*Aperuit Illis* #7)

A profound bond links sacred Scripture and the faith of believers. Since faith comes from hearing, and what is heard is based on the word of Christ (cf. Rom 10:17), believers are bound to listen attentively to the word of the Lord, both in the celebration of the liturgy and in their personal prayer and reflection. (*Aperuit Illis* #7)

As the Second Vatican Council teaches, “the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she has venerated the Lord’s body, in that she never ceases, above all in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the word of God and the body of Christ.” (Aperuit Illis #8)

Regular reading of sacred Scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist make it possible for us to see ourselves as part of one another. As Christians, we are a single people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us. (Aperuit Illis #8)

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. (Aperuit Illis #8)

Since the Scriptures teach with a view to salvation through faith in Christ (cf. 2 Tim 3:15), the truths contained therein are profitable for our salvation. The Bible is not a collection of history books or a chronicle, but is aimed entirely at the integral salvation of the person. The evident historical setting of the books of the Bible should not make us overlook their primary goal, which is our salvation. (Aperuit Illis #9)

To achieve this saving purpose, sacred Scripture, by the working of the Holy Spirit, makes human words written in human fashion become the word of God. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is primordial. Without the work of the Spirit, there would always be a risk of remaining limited to the written text alone. This would open the way to a fundamentalist reading, which needs to be avoided, lest we betray the inspired, dynamic and spiritual character of the sacred text. (Aperuit Illis #10)

God’s word constantly reminds us of the merciful love of the Father who calls his children to live in love. The life of Jesus is the full and perfect expression of this divine love, which holds nothing back but offers itself to all without reserve. (Aperuit Illis #13)

We need to have confidence in the working of the Holy Spirit as he continues in his own way to provide “inspiration” whenever the Church teaches the sacred Scriptures, whenever the Magisterium authentically interprets them, and whenever each believer makes them the norm of his or her spiritual life. (Aperuit Illis #10)

When sacred Scripture is read in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written, it remains ever new. The Old Testament is never old once it is part of the New, since all has been transformed thanks to the one Spirit who inspired it. The sacred text as a whole serves a prophetic function regarding not the future but the present of whoever is nourished by this word. Jesus himself clearly stated this at the beginning of his ministry: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21). (Aperuit Illis #12)





## Ways to Grow in Devotion to the Word of God

The Church celebrated the Sunday of the Word of God for the first time on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time of 2020. This is a new celebration instituted by Pope Francis with the apostolic letter, *Aperuit Illis*.

The Pope instituted this celebration because, he wrote, “It is fitting, then that the life of our people be constantly marked by this decisive relationship with the living word that the Lord never tires of speaking to his Bride, that she may grow in love and faithfulness.” The Scriptures themselves tell us that “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ...” (Hebrews 4:12). This tells us two things: first, that God wants to speak to us; second, that listening to God speak is the way for us to grow into our fullest potential.

**1. Enthroned a Bible in your home.** Give the Word of God a prime place of honour and reverence in the home. Start by creating and devoting a “sacred space.” The Bible then becomes the spiritual centre of the home. Family members will be reminded daily of the importance of the Bible in the life of the Church and family. Visitors might even be curious about the purpose of this sacred space.

**2. Commit to a Bible study, especially with a group.** Father Mike Schmitz’s *The Bible in a Year* was a top podcast in the world. There are numerous other great studies available: some on individual books of the Bible, and some on themes throughout Scripture. Remember, though, that the full potential of any study of the Bible is best achieved in community. The Bible was never meant to be studied only. It was meant to be discussed with the Church and, more importantly, to be lived in the world.

**3. Begin reading the daily Mass readings.** For those who may have completed *The Bible in a Year*, or those who simply need a slightly different format,

engaging with the daily Mass readings can be a great way to incorporate more Sacred Scripture into your life. Each and every day of the year, you will get readings from the Old and New Testaments. Over time, coupled with other recommendations on this list, your understanding of the Bible and, most importantly, your love of Jesus will grow immensely.

**4. Commit to learning *lectio divina*.** *Lectio divina* literally means “divine reading.” It is the way that the Church Fathers came to deeper understandings of Sacred Scripture in the first centuries after Jesus’ resurrection. It was recommended by the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI as the key that would unlock a new spiritual springtime in the Church.

**5. Commit to a holy hour, at least once each week.** We must keep in mind that the Word of God is a person — the Divine Word, Jesus Christ. All the recommendations above must lead us to a deeper relationship and communion with him.

There is no better place to commune with Jesus than in his true Presence. Many parishes offer adoration throughout the week or on special feast days. In the absence of adoration, it is perfectly acceptable to go inside a church or chapel and sit in front of Jesus in the tabernacle.

**If you want to be a better disciple** of Jesus, and if you commit to one or more of these habits, your devotion to the Word of God will certainly grow. This is especially true for the last four recommendations, which can become weekly or even daily habits. Let’s hope that by forming these devotional habits the Word of God “may speed ahead and be honoured” (2 Thessalonians 3:1) in our homes, our communities and our world.

## 10 Suggestions for Fruitful Scripture Reading



The Bible is all around us. People hear Scripture readings in church. We have Good Samaritan (Luke 10) laws, welcome home the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), and look for the Promised Land (Exodus 3, Hebrews 11). Some biblical passages have become popular maxims, such as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12)," "Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15), and "love thy neighbour" (Matthew 22:39).

The following suggestions may assist in a more fruitful reading of Scripture:

1. **Bible reading is for Catholics.** The Church encourages Catholics to make reading the Bible part of their daily prayer lives. Reading these inspired words, people grow deeper in their relationship with God and come to understand their place in the community God has called them to in himself.
2. **Prayer is the beginning and the end.** Reading the Bible is not like reading a novel or a history book. It should begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to the Word of God. Scripture reading should end with a prayer that this Word will bear fruit in our lives, helping us to become holier and more faithful people.
3. **Get the whole story! When selecting a Bible, look for a Catholic edition.** A Catholic edition will include the Church's complete list of

sacred books along with introductions and notes for understanding the text. A Catholic edition will have an *imprimatur* notice on the back of the title page. An *imprimatur* indicates that the book is free of errors in Catholic doctrine.

4. **The Bible isn't a book. It's a library.** The Bible is a collection of 73 books written over the course of many centuries. The books include royal history, prophecy, poetry, challenging letters to struggling new faith communities, and believers' accounts of the preaching and passion of Jesus. Knowing the genre of the book you are reading will help you understand the literary tools the author is using and the meaning the author is trying to convey.
5. **Know what the Bible is – and what it isn't.** The Bible is the story of God's relationship with the people he has called to himself. It is not intended to be read as history text, a science book, or a political manifesto. In the Bible, God teaches us the truths that we need for the sake of our salvation.
6. **The sum is greater than the parts.** Read the Bible in context. What happens before and after – even in other books – helps us to understand the true meaning of the text.
7. **The Old relates to the New.** The Old Testament and the New Testament shed light on each other. While we read the Old Testament in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, it has its own value as well. Together, these testaments help us to understand God's plan for human beings.
8. **You do not read alone.** By reading and reflecting on Sacred Scripture, Catholics join those faithful men and women who have taken God's Word to heart and put it into practice in their lives. We read the Bible within the tradition of the Church to benefit from the holiness and wisdom of all the faithful.
9. **What is God saying to me?** The Bible is not addressed only to long-dead people in a faraway land. It is addressed to each of us in our own unique situations. When we read, we need to understand what the text says and how the faithful have understood its meaning in the past. In light of this understanding, we then ask: What is God saying to me?
10. **Reading isn't enough.** If Scripture remains just words on a page, our work is not done. We need to meditate on the message and put it into action in our lives. Only then can the word be "living and effective." (Hebrews 4:12).