

Homily Resources for the Sunday of the Word of God

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There are there models here for inspiration and adaptation.

1. The Sunday of the Word of God 2020
2. The Gospel according to Matthew
3. The Sunday Gospel (Matthew 4:12-23)

1. The Sunday of the Word of God 2020

Background

- The gradual rediscovery of the Word of God in the Catholic Church.
- Vatican II and the new lectionary (now 50 years old!).
- Dialogue with fellow Christians of other traditions.
- The hunger of the ordinary believer.

Foreground

- The current crisis of faith / Christianity.
- The need to go back to the original inspiration of Jesus and his teaching.
- Pope Francis has given great leadership by his teaching on the Word of God and by his daily preaching of the Word.

Practical possibilities

- Lectio divina – prayerful reflection, usually on the Sunday Gospel, done in groups or by yourself.
- Join a bible study group in your own or a neighbouring parish.
- Look out for courses in parishes and deaneries.

Material for quotations

Vatican II (Constitution on the Liturgy)

51. The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word. In this way a more representative portion of the holy scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years.

Benedict XVI (Verbum Domini)

30. Saint Jerome recalls that we can never read Scripture simply on our own. We come up against too many closed doors and we slip too easily into error. The Bible was written by the People of God for the People of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Only in this communion with the People of God can we truly enter as a "we" into the heart of the truth that God himself wishes to convey to us. Jerome, for whom "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ", states that the ecclesial dimension of biblical

interpretation is not a requirement imposed from without: the Book is the very voice of the pilgrim People of God, and only within the faith of this People are we, so to speak, attuned to understand sacred Scripture. An authentic interpretation of the Bible must always be in harmony with the faith of the Catholic Church. He thus wrote to a priest: "Remain firmly attached to the traditional doctrine that you have been taught, so that you may exhort according to sound doctrine and confound those who contradict it".

Pope Francis (Evangelii Gaudium)

3. I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.

2. The Gospel according to Matthew

Introduction

- This Gospel will be read on most Sundays in 2020. Some basic information might be useful. But, first of all...
- History is always written from a point of view.
- Often, writers have in mind the present and are trying to shape it.
- A good example would be the history of 1916 – told differently today than it would have been in 1966 or 1939.

Application

- The same is true of the Gospels.
- Matthew was writing for a community in a particular situation.

Matthew's Gospel

- It is likely that Matthew's Gospel was written in Syria, in the city of Antioch, modern Antakya, a city with a large Jewish population. Originally, the community was fully part of the Jewish community.
- It is likely that Matthew and his community broke away from Judaism after the war between the Jews and the Romans which led to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This means that the Christian community in Antioch was, at least initially, a breakaway religious group, a sect.
- Usually a sect has strong feelings about the mother religion and the Christians in Antioch were no different. They were deeply disappointed that the mother religion did not recognise Jesus as Messiah and at the same time they claimed to be more faithful to God, more responsive to the next evolution of God's relationship with humanity.
- Matthew writes very much in dialogue with the Jewish Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament.

And so...

- It means at least three things. Firstly, the roots of our faith were and are in Judaism – so much so that any kind of anti-Semitism is impossible for us.
- Secondly, it is impossible to read the Gospel without opening the Old Testament – very often, there are echoes of characters, stories and themes, as in today's Gospel, which quotes the prophet Isaiah.
- Finally, the very first scene in this Gospel has the words: he shall be called Emmanuel, a name which means God with us. It is not an accident that the very last words of Matthew's Gospel are: I am with you always, to the end of the age. Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.
- Welcome to the journey with Matthew for 2020.

3. The Sunday Gospel (Matthew 4:12-23)

Introduction

- Today we start reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.
- This Gospel will accompany us on almost all the Sundays of 2020.
- It is a very pastoral Gospel, which can help us meet Jesus again and go forward on the journey of faith.

Today's Gospel

- Today's Gospel gives us the foundational proclamation of Jesus. There are two moments in the story.
- (i) Jesus arrival in Galilee and his proclamation.
- (ii) The call of the first disciples.

Jesus' proclamation

- The kingdom of heaven: like many in his day (including John the Baptist), Jesus looked forward to God showing as the one who brings justice and peace. Such a desire arose from the challenging conditions of the day (and our day) in which it was difficult to see the presence or action of God. Where is God in the mess? Many hoped that God would finally let himself be seen and known.
- Repent: actually a better word would be "convert." Repent implies looking mostly to the past while convert suggest a wider renewed vision of the world. As we know from the many great conversion in Christian history, conversion can turn a life around completely. Converts are usually aware of a sharp "before" and "after."
- For us as Christian believers, we are not asked simply to believe the *message of Jesus* but also the *message about Jesus*. In his ministry, teaching, death and resurrection we recognise God with us, our Emmanuel.
- The quotation above from Pope Francis might be useful at this point.

Summing up

- Where am I on the journey of faith?
- What do I really believe and hold on to?
- How will I walk the path of discipleship in this coming year?
- Are there resources at my disposal to help me in the way?