

Encouragement Encouragement

December 2019 – Issue 101

'The Word'... God's Word



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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). How many times do we hear these words of St. John the Evangelist and take them for granted? Have you ever pondered those words and wondered what they mean? It seems a strange way to refer to God as ‘The Word’... yet it is crucial to do so. Of course they are mysterious mystical words and it would take a lifetime to truly grasp the significance of them. However, they are an opening to the mystery of ‘The God who Speaks’. ‘The Word’ did become Flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. He became fully human and yet fully God. God made a covenant with man to send a redeemer and gave us a promise of life with Him through His Son. (John 1:14). As we approach Christmas and celebrate Advent, a coming of Jesus into the world, these words should penetrate our hearts and minds ever the more deeply. We should let them take root and take hold so that The Word becomes part of our very existence, breathed in and exhaled and spoken of to others.

It has become a feature of our Services and prayer that we spend time reflecting on Scripture, Old and New Testament, and prominence is given to the daily passages so that we can appreciate what the Lord our God is saying to us. We are given the Words of Jesus himself so that we can live them out. But how sad it is that too few people know their Bible well enough to appreciate the content and its truth and light. This of course varies greatly from one Christian Denomination to another and one country to another which through the circumstance of history and events has been a point of difference. In reality there can be no difference on this issue and ‘The Word’ is central to all Christian belief. There should be no Christian who does not ponder the Word of God as St Jerome said *‘Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ’*. The tradition of Scripture being central was fully

appreciated by St. Jerome many centuries ago: In studying Isaiah in many texts of different biblical languages he said the following, indeed calling Isaiah an Evangelist and Apostle because he tells us much about Jesus’ birth...

“I interpret as I should, following the command of Christ: Search the Scriptures, and Seek and you shall find. Christ will not say to me what He said to the Jews: You erred, not knowing the Scriptures and not knowing the power of God. For if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”.



It is true that we communicate using words in different ways and sometimes wordlessly, but living ‘The Word’ means understanding God’s command to us and His pleasure in speaking to us. He wants us to speak to Him but also to listen to the words that He gives us either through Scripture or through others or even the circumstances of our lives. But we also have a command to share what we have, as He told the Apostles, and we are told to ‘Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News’ (Mark 16-15). It is impossible to convey that which we know nothing about. It is like trying to speak a foreign language with not a word known of it. It is also like telling someone that you love and care for them having never experienced love or knowing them at all...

The word *Gospel* literally means *“Good News”* and occurs 93 times in the Bible, exclusively in the New Testament. In Greek, it is the word *Euaggelion*, from which we get our English words Evangelist. If Jesus tells us that it is ‘Good News’ surely we should find out what it is? Why is it good... why is it news... The core of our faith rests on understanding this essential message of our salvation which is rooted in why the Father sent His only Son to be born and to die.

“Who is able to understand, Lord, all the richness of even one of your words?”

Saint Ephrem

He became like one of us so that The Word of the Father could be translated and understood in the life and being of Jesus. Christmas is not only a nice fire and candles, trees, lights or gifts it is to celebrate the utter and complete love that the Father has for each of us and as seen in the birth of a tiny infant who shows us how to live. It is also to prepare us for His return and the way that God's Word is found in ages past in the lives of The Jewish people who long for the coming of the Messiah...

“God is not a God of coincidence or chaos, and Jesus was no coincidence. John’s words show us that Jesus was with God in the beginning. He is God, one with God, and the life He came to live on this earth was a part of a glorious plan from the beginning.” (Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrossio)



This Advent (1st December) marks the official start of the year dedicated to The Word...Pope Francis has named it *‘The God who Speaks’*. I can almost hear the response; ‘but how does He speak... I have never heard Him or - He never answers my prayers and talks to me’. Deeply embedded in all Scripture is the Word of God. The trouble is we tend to read it with our hearts closed and ears inattentive. In a mysterious way ‘The Word’ breaks through our consciences and reveals the truth to us. This may be as guidance, as challenge, or by granting understanding or compassion. This can be while reading or listening to Scripture. It can be ‘in that still small voice’ that speaks with such clarity through our hearts when things are difficult. It may be through ‘A Word’ given to us at any given moment. It can be through Psalms, songs or Hymns. Very recently I attended a ‘Retreat of Joy’ where we shared Music to pray and reflect on ‘The Word’. There were many pieces of music that touched somebody in the group, each in their own need (Minsteracres). Many references were utterly scriptural.

If you find it hard to read the bible, try taking a small passage that you may be more or less familiar with, or know about, such as the Annunciation or the Birth of Jesus. Read it slowly and think of each bit, maybe picturing it or questioning it... God hears our ‘why’s’ and questions. Maybe next time you sing or pray a Psalm in church - go back and try to find it in the Bible. Let others help you too; sharing is a good way to learn! Of course if you are a Reader/Lector or have special responsibility to teach or instruct then it is vital that ‘The Word’ has first been understood by you and truly assimilated. Perhaps, reading the

passage several times in the course of a week might be a good way to understand it.

God cannot and will not ever desert those who seek Him with an open heart and mind...

So this Advent, Christmas and year, be blessed with the Word of God. Rejoice at His coming. Delight in His presence: Become ‘The Word’ to others...

Halina Holman

Pope Francis

“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. The Bible is the book of the Lord’s people, who, in listening to it, move from dispersion and division toward unity as well as come to understand God’s love and become inspired to share it with others”.

September 2019 ‘Aperuit illis’,

(Instituting ‘Sunday of the Word’)



The Magnificat

“My soul glorifies the Lord,

My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

He looks on his servant in her lowliness;

Henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

The Almighty works marvels for me.

Holy his name!

His mercy is from age to age,

on those who fear him...”

Luke 1: 46-55

Feast Days in December

1st First Sunday of Advent

6th St. Nicholas, Bishop

8th Second Sunday of Advent

9th Immaculate Conception, Blessed Virgin Mary

12th Our Lady of Guadalupe

14th St. John of the Cross, Carmelite & Priest

15th Third Sunday of Advent

22nd Fourth Sunday of Advent

25th Nativity of the Lord (Holy day of Obligation)

26th St. Stephen

27th St. John, Apostle

28th The Holy Innocents

29th The Holy Family

**‘Peace, Joy and Blessings to All our Members and Readers,
now and always’**

Prayerfully, Halina