

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday per Annum - A  
Isaiah 8:23-9:3;  
I Corinthians 1:10-13, 17;  
Matthew 4:12-23  
Little Flower - 1/26/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

On September 30, 2019, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter instituting the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as the annual Sunday of the Word of God. Today, then, marks the first annual celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God. Today we are celebrating the Sunday of the Word of God by enthroning the Book of Gospels at all the Masses and by blessing your Bibles.

Catholics and non-Catholic Christians believe that the Bible is the living Word of God. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We believe that God is the principal author of the Bible.

However, when I was growing up, for the most part, most Catholics never read the Bible. Many Catholic families did not even own a Bible. When I was in grade school, we did not study the Bible. We studied Bible History. In those days the Mass was divided into two parts, the Mass of the Catechumens and the Mass of the Faithful. The Mass of the Catechumens was the equivalent of our Liturgy of the Word. However, Catholics who missed the entire Liturgy of the Word still fulfilled the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Also, there were only two readings at Mass, and they were the same every year. Therefore, the Liturgy exposed the Catholic faithful to only a very small part of the Word of God.

How things have changed! According to Pope Francis, “the Second Vatican Council gave great impulse to the rediscovery of the word of God...” Catholics began reading the Bible and attending Bible Studies. When I arrived at Little Flower, Dottie Spalding was leading a Wednesday morning Bible study, and Anita Moody was leading evening Bible studies. Currently our *Invite* Commission is hosting a Bible study focusing on St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans, one of his most important letters.

Likewise, as a result of the Second Vatican Council, Scripture began to take on a much more important role in the Liturgy. The first major part of the Liturgy is now called the Liturgy of the Word. Several documents of the Council make the point that at the Eucharist we are fed from two tables, the table of the Word of God and the table of the Eucharist. On Sundays and important feasts, we went from two readings to three readings. Also, by creating a three-year Sunday Lectionary and a two-year weekday Lectionary, the Church introduces Catholics to a much larger selection of Scripture readings.

Our readings today all offer us insight into the Word of God. Several times in Matthew’s Gospel, he quotes loosely from the Old Testament to argue that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. In other words, the better we understand the Old Testament, the better we understand Christ himself. Hearing and reading the Gospels are among the best ways for us to get to know Jesus personally. We hear his words and witness his deeds, culminating in his death and resurrection. After all, according to John’s Gospel, Jesus himself is the Word of God.

Today’s second reading comes from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians. Msgr. Bosler once told me that Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians is so rich that a parish could base its entire RCIA program on it. Also, in today’s reading, Paul is addressing divisions within the community. I would suggest that reading, studying, and praying the Scriptures can help unify a community.

My brothers and sisters, last week Sean Hussey, the Director of Evangelization and Discipleship for the Archdiocese, spoke to some of our ministry leaders. He talked about sharing our faith story. Sean suggested that the first element in sharing our story is the story of our conversion, which can be difficult for those of us who have always been immersed in the life of the Church. However, as I thought about it, if I was going to talk about a time of conversion in my life, it was probably the summer after my freshman year of high school. That was the first time I sat down to read the Gospels. That summer Jesus came alive to me in a new way.

My first challenge to you is to read the Gospels—Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John in that order. My bulletin letter suggests a couple of ways to do that. My second challenge is to read the Sunday readings before you come to Mass. Beginning next Sunday, they will be in the bulletin of the previous Sunday. For those of you who are more adventurous, my third challenge is to consider enrolling in our next Bible Study.