

Proclaiming the Living Word

The ministry of the Word in the world

By EILEEN PONDER

All of us who are baptized, who share in the eucharistic banquet and claim membership in the discipleship of Jesus Christ have heard and shared in the power of the Word of God. Like the stories we share about ourselves every day that communicate who we are, the proclamation of the Word tells us who we are, anchoring our identity as the people of God. We embrace the Word and let it change us, forming us into more perfect images of God for the sake of our world. Made present to us in the proclamation of the Word, Christ animates our conversations, encourages our hearts, strengthens our minds, and sends us to be ministers of the Word in the world.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC) tells us that full and active participation in the liturgy is “the primary, indeed the indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit” (SC #14). The General Instruction of the Roman Missal calls readers / lectors to help all of us “develop a warm and lively love for sacred scripture from listening to the reading of sacred texts.” These are powerful words and profound challenges for us all. How can we become better listeners of the Word?

1. Explore the phrase, “Word of God” throughout the Bible in a concordance. Soak in the significance of its origin in the Old Testament and trace its development throughout the history of salvation. A simpler route is to research the “Word of God” online or read about it in a good Catholic encyclopedia.

2. Buy a book containing the Sunday (and weekday) readings. *Magnificat* from Magnificat in Yonkers, NY, is a fine resource. Liturgy Training Publications in Chicago also offers two good books, *At Home with the Word* and *Workbook for*



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Lectors and Gospel Readers. Many similar publications are available as well as online resources such as the USCCB’s Web site.

Some people like to prepare for Mass by reading the assigned passages. But it is also crucial to remember that Sunday begins and forms us for the week ahead, so look at the readings throughout your week, allowing them to form your disposition. Incorporate them into weekly and daily routines.

◆ If you come to Mass with loved ones, talk about the readings on the way home or at a meal that follows. This is especially helpful with children. This doesn’t have to be formal or forced, just look for ways to make connections with what naturally comes up in conversation or the day’s other activities.

◆ Reread the readings at home Sunday afternoon or evening (or as soon as is practical) and jot down one or two ideas from the texts that you want to strive toward during the week. Tape this to a mirror, desktop, or wherever you are likely to see it every day.

◆ Journal about what you heard.

3. Learn the Lectionary: it’s structure, theology, cycles, and mandates. The Introduction offers a beautiful theology of the Word and much practical information about this important book. Discover the differences between reading the Bible and proclaiming from the Lectionary.

4. Finally, get involved. Too many of us hear the Word proclaimed poorly week after week in our parishes. If you’re in that situation, offer to help improve things.

◆ Explore other parishes where the Word is proclaimed well and import their ideas or try to bring in whomever does the training there. Read up on the subject, offer to become a lector or to help secure training for those who are.

◆ Explore the possibility of starting a homily reflection group. To help them grow in their ministry, many homilists meet regularly with groups of parishioners.

◆ Advocate for well-trained music ministers to make the Responsorial Psalm beautiful and engaging.

◆ If you are in a position to do so, consider a monetary donation ear-marked to help with the costs of well-training liturgical ministers.

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