

Proclamation of the Word

A guide for readers and Scripture resources to support our Archdiocese

The Third Sunday of Ordinary Time is the 'Sunday of the Word of God' - a day, instituted by Pope Francis on the Feast of Saint Jerome in 2019, devoted to the celebration and study of Sacred Scripture.

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.

Pope Francis, Aperuit illis



The Word of God is alive: down the centuries, it accompanies us and by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is at work in every age. For the Lord is always faithful to his promise, which, in his love for humanity, he always keeps. This is exactly what Jesus says in the synagogue in Nazareth:

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21).

**Pope Francis | Saint Peter's Basilica
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, 26 January 2025**

As we celebrate the **Sunday of the Word of God**, we give thanks for the priceless gift of Sacred Scripture—the living Word through which God continues to speak to His people. The Bible is not merely a book of the past; it is the **voice of God for today**, alive and active, capable of shaping our hearts, guiding our choices, and renewing our hope. In the Scriptures, God draws near to us. He comforts the weary, challenges the complacent, corrects our paths, and reveals His endless mercy. When we listen attentively to the Word, **we encounter Christ Himself**, for He is the Word made flesh. To know the Scriptures is to know Christ more deeply. We offer this resource as a way of renewing our commitment to making the Word of God central in our lives, and particularly for those throughout the Archdiocese who minister the word in our communities. We hear in **Evangelli Gaudium**: *The study of the Sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer. It is essential that the revealed word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith.*

*Evangelization demands familiarity with God's word, which calls for dioceses, parishes and Catholic associations to provide for a serious, ongoing study of the Bible, while encouraging its **prayerful individual and communal reading**. We do not blindly seek God, or wait for him to speak to us first, for "God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us". Let us receive the sublime treasure of the revealed word'. #175*

+ John Sherrington **Archbishop of Liverpool**



GOD REVEALS HIMSELF THROUGH SCRIPTURE

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body...all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture. For in the sacred books, the

Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life. Consequently these words are perfectly applicable to Sacred Scripture: "For the word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12) and "it has power to build you up and give you your heritage among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32; see 1 Thess. 2:13).

Dei Verbum 21, Second Vatican Council 1965

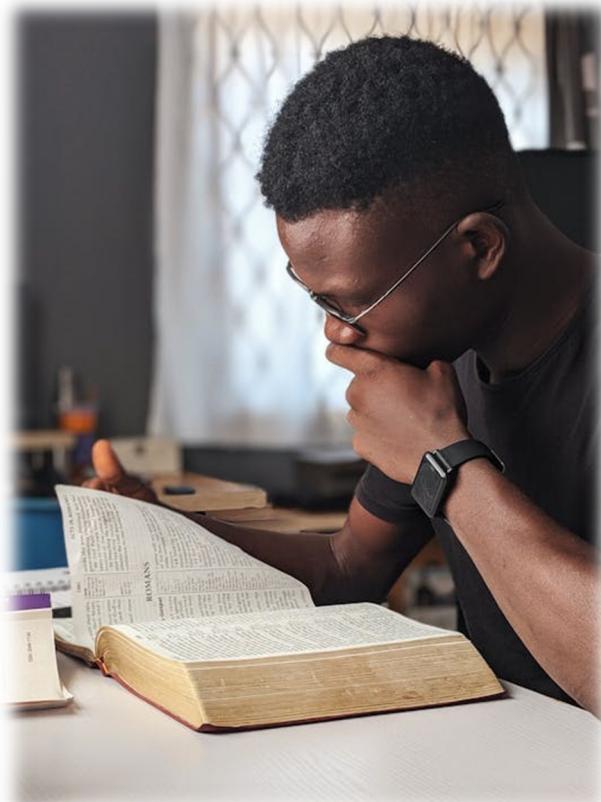
Principle when reading the Bible:

God is the **principal author** of Sacred Scripture. He inspired human writers who lived at different times and places in history. These writers used their own language, education, and personality when they wrote.

Because of this, **God's truth is shared in many ways**, such as history, poetry, prophecy, and stories. Catholics try to understand what the human author meant to teach as true, and also recognize when images or symbols are used to help explain the message.

God revealed Scripture for our **salvation**. Together with Church teaching, worship, and Christian living, Scripture forms the **deposit of faith**. This is the fullness of God's truth, given to the Church to **protect, teach, and pass on** through every generation.

We do not read alone, we read the Bible within the **tradition of the Church**—in this way we benefit from the holiness and wisdom of the entire Church.



There are different senses to our understanding of the Bible

The literal sense

The meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation. All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal. Here we look at the actual story and the cultural context of when it was written.

The spiritual sense

In light of the unity of God's plan, not just the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs.

The moral sense

The events we read in Scripture should lead us to act justly and fairly. In today's world Sacred Scripture calls us to action.

The allegorical sense

We can find a more profound understanding of events by seeing their significance in Christ; so the crossing of the Red Sea is both a sign of Christ's victory and of Christian baptism.

The anagogical sense

We can see the realities and events in the Bible in terms of their eternal significance, leading us home to God. So the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem.

With thanks to 'New Lectionary, New Opportunities', produced by the Biblical Apostolate of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for content used.

Godwhospeaks.uk/recommendations/

The Old Testament (46 books)

The Pentateuch (The Law)

Genesis – Creation, the fall, the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph), and God's covenant beginnings.

Exodus – God frees Israel from slavery in Egypt; the covenant and Ten Commandments.

Leviticus – Laws for worship, sacrifice, and holiness.

Numbers – Israel's wandering in the desert and struggles with obedience.

Deuteronomy – Moses' final teachings; a renewal of the Law before entering the Promised Land.

Historical Books

Joshua – Conquest and settlement of the Promised Land.

Judges – Cycles of sin, punishment, repentance, and deliverance by judges.

Ruth – A story of loyalty and faith; ancestry of King David.

1 Samuel – Samuel, Saul's rise and fall, David's anointing.

2 Samuel – David's reign, sins, and God's covenant with him.

1 Kings – Solomon's reign and wisdom; division of the kingdom.

2 Kings – Decline of Israel and Judah; exile due to unfaithfulness.

1 Chronicles – Genealogies and David's reign, emphasizing worship.

2 Chronicles – Kings of Judah and temple history.

Ezra – Return from exile; rebuilding the Temple.

Nehemiah – Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls and spiritual reform.

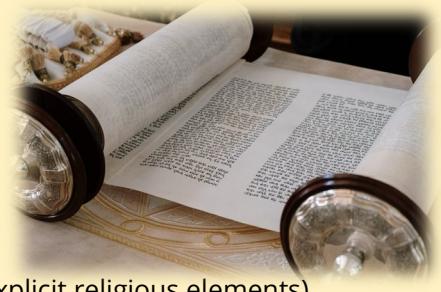
Tobit (*Deuterocanonical*) – Faith, prayer, angels, and God's providence.

Judith (*Deuterocanonical*) – God saves Israel through Judith's courage.

Esther – God protects His people from destruction (Greek version includes explicit religious elements).

1 Maccabees (*Deuterocanonical*) – Jewish revolt for religious freedom.

2 Maccabees (*Deuterocanonical*) – Martyrdom, resurrection, prayer for the dead.



Wisdom Books

Job – Suffering, faith, and trust in God.

Psalms – Prayers, hymns, and praises to God.

Proverbs – Practical wisdom for holy living.

Ecclesiastes – Life's meaning and vanity apart from God.

Song of Songs – Poetic celebration of love (human and divine).

Wisdom (*Deuterocanonical*) – God's justice, wisdom, and immortality.

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) (*Deuterocanonical*) – Moral teachings and reverence for God.

Prophetic Books

Isaiah – Judgment and hope; prophecy of the Messiah.

Jeremiah – Call to repentance; God's enduring covenant.

Lamentations – Mourning the fall of Jerusalem.

Baruch (*Deuterocanonical*) – Hope and repentance during exile.

Ezekiel – God's glory, judgment, and restoration.

Daniel – Faithfulness under persecution; God's ultimate victory (includes Susanna, Bel and the Dragon).

Hosea – God's faithful love despite Israel's infidelity.

Joel – Call to repentance; promise of the Spirit.

Amos – Social justice and true worship.

Obadiah – Judgment on Edom.

Jonah – God's mercy toward all nations.

Micah – Justice, humility, and the Messiah from Bethlehem.

Nahum – Fall of Nineveh.

Habakkuk – Trusting God amid injustice.

Zephaniah – Day of the Lord and restoration.

Haggai – Rebuilding the Temple.

Zechariah – Messianic hope and renewal.

Malachi – Covenant faithfulness; promise of Elijah's return.

"Deuterocanonical" refers to certain books that are included in the Old Testament of the Catholic Orthodox Bibles, but not in the Hebrew Bible and are generally unaccepted by most Protestant traditions.



NOT READING, BUT PROCLAIMING!

Sacred scripture is of the **greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy**. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning.

Sacrosanctum Concilium 27, Second Vatican Council

'...when the holy scriptures are read in church **God himself is speaking to his people**, and Christ, present in His word, is proclaiming His gospel. Hence the readings from God's word are among the most important elements in the liturgy and all who are present should listen to them with reverence'

General Instruction of the Roman Missal



To agree to be a reader of the word of God at Mass is to take on a **noble and gracious** work. It is to share in the Church's mission of proclaiming the Good News to the world like the angels at the empty tomb on that bright Easter morning who told that Christ had risen from the dead. Similarly, today's ministers of the word are heavenly messengers, commissioned as heralds of something astounding that absolutely changes the face of the earth....So you who administer the word at Mass are today's '**angels', 'apostles', 'messengers', 'commissioned ministers'**', and that is why your service is so exalted, so dignified, so significant. It is a vocation in the literal sense of a calling. Something we are called to. First called, then sent. First 'Come and see,' then 'Go and tell'. Often, we imagine we are readers because we decided. But actually, it was never a matter of our initiative. That came from elsewhere. We responded to an invitation—perhaps from the parish priest or from another reader. But ultimately the **invitation was from the Holy Spirit**, inspiring and moving us to the idea from within.

Fr Oliver Treanor—Speaking on God's Behalf, 2018

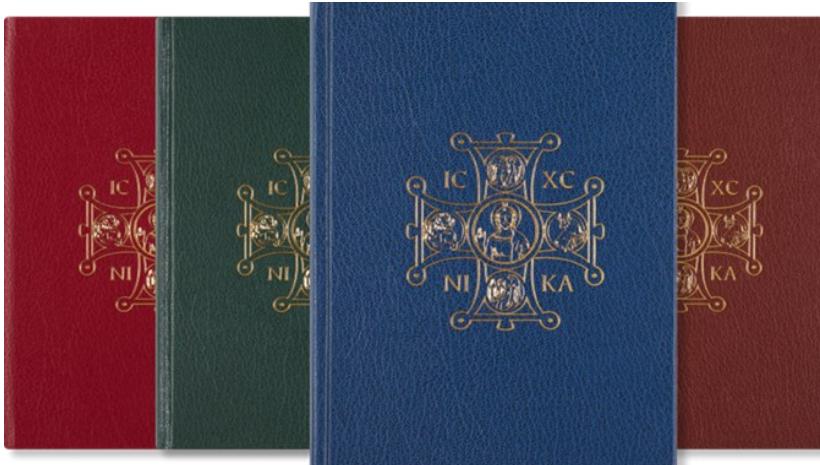
Bibles approved for private study include:

- New Revised Standard Version
- Revised Standard Version
- Revised New Jerusalem Bible
- New Jerusalem Bible
- Jerusalem Bible
- Christian Community Bible

Divine Office List:

- Jerusalem Bible
- Knox Bible
- New English Bible
- Revised Standard Version
- Good News Bible

THE LECTORY



The **Lectionary** is an essential liturgical book in the Catholic Church, serving as a guide for the **readings** proclaimed during the Mass throughout the liturgical year. The Lectionary plays a central role in shaping the spiritual life of the faithful by connecting Scripture with the rhythm of Catholic worship.

Volume I
Volume II
Volume III
Volume IV

Sundays, Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord
Weekdays and Saints Part 1
Weekdays and Saints Part 2
Ritual Masses, Various Occasions, Votive Masses and Masses for the Dead

There is a 3-year cycle for Sundays A, B and C—we are currently in Year A.

There is a 2-year cycle for Weekdays I and II—we are currently in Year II.

These cycles begin with the start of the liturgical calendar, on the First Sunday of Advent.

The Lectionary organises Scripture readings into a structured cycle, ensuring that Catholics are exposed to a wide range of biblical texts over time. It includes:

First Reading: Often from the Old Testament (or Acts of the Apostles during the Easter season), highlighting God's covenant and history with His people.

Responsorial Psalm: A psalm that responds to the first reading, typically sung or recited by the congregation.

Second Reading: Usually from the New Testament letters (*Epistles*), offering teachings and encouragement for Christian living.

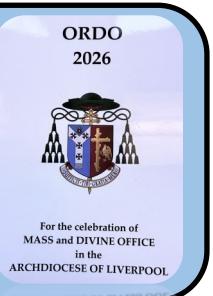
Gospel Verse: Connected to the Acclamation (*Alleluia outside of Lent*). Usually a direct Biblical quotation, but sometimes adapted.

Gospel: The climactic reading of the Mass, focusing on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (*Proclaimed by the deacon or priest*)

National and diocesan calendars



There are two useful resources when preparing liturgy. The first is the **Ordo 2026** for the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The second is an app called Universalis. This app gives national calendar with an option to choose Liverpool so that commemoration of local and particular saints to the church in our diocese can be chosen.



Interesting Fact...

The lectionaries combined use **90% of the Gospels, 55% of the rest of the New Testament and 13% of the Old Testament**. When the lectionary was revised from the Old Missal in the 1960s this was a significant increase!

But it is important to remember that we cannot rely on the Sunday Mass readings alone.

We are encouraged to explore the rest of the Bible as we go about our daily lives, helping us in our understanding of God's revelation to us.

PRACTICALITIES—TIPS FOR GETTING IT RIGHT!

PREPARING TO READ: CHECKLISTS

1. Familiarise yourself with your reading(s). Allow time to **pray** with them.
2. Ask yourself:
 - *What sort of a reading is this?*
 - *What genre of book does it come from?*
 - *When and why was that book written?*
 - *How does that book relate to the rest of the Bible?*
 - *What is this particular passage talking about?*
 - *What does it say to you?*
3. Read the passage aloud as if to others.



ASPECTS OF PROCLAMATION

1. **Check in advance** with the celebrant for any options (e.g. *shorter forms of readings*)
2. Check before Mass begins that the Lectionary is **open at the right page**. Check where page turns occur in the Lectionary.
3. How is your posture?
4. Be **attentive/responsive to the congregation**: e.g. *wait for them to be ready to listen; respond to noise which has prevented their hearing by repeating text, speaking more loudly or more slowly.*
5. Consider your use of **voice**:
 - a. how to **pace** the reading
 - b. your **volume**: do not assume that you can speak softly simply because there is a microphone, vary the volume and tone
 - c. when to **pause**.
6. Adjust the proclamation to the context:
 - a. introduction to reading: 'A reading from...' (*observe a pause before beginning the reading*) **ONLY READ WHAT IS WRITTEN IN BLACK** *Don't read anything in red*
 - b. the readings themselves: *respond to the genre of readings; narrative (dramatic/ humorous); legal text; letter; poetry; etc*
 - c. conclusion of reading: (*observe a pause of a slow count of five before the acclamation: 'The Word of the Lord.'*)
 - d. leading the Responsorial Psalm: (when it is read) how can you help the congregation make their response
 - e. reading the Prayer of the Faithful: reading more slowly, allowing time for congregation to pray for the intention before introducing the responsory, e.g. 'Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer'.
7. Consider how you leave the ambo and the Sanctuary. Establish what your parish

PRAYER



*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
the decrees of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*

Psalm 19: 7-11 ESVCE

There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call **lectio divina**. It consists of reading God's word **in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us**. This prayerful reading of the Bible is not something separate from the study undertaken by the preacher to ascertain the central message of the text; on the contrary, it should **begin with that study and then go on to discern how that same message speaks to his own life**. The spiritual reading of a text must start with its literal sense. Otherwise we can easily make the text say what we think is convenient, useful for confirming us in our previous decisions, suited to our own patterns of thought. Ultimately this would be tantamount to using something sacred for our own benefit and then passing on this confusion to God's people. We must never forget that sometimes "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2Cor 11:14) ***Evangelii Gaudium 152***

Lectio Divina is an ancient Christian practice of praying with Scripture. It's a contemplative method, meant to deepen your relationship with God rather than just to study the Bible. Traditionally, it has **four main steps**.

1. Lectio (Reading) *Slowly and attentively read a passage of Scripture to understand what the text literally says.* Read the passage several times. Notice words or phrases that stand out. Don't rush—focus on comprehension and presence.

2. Meditatio (Meditation) *Reflect on the meaning of the text to understand what God is saying through the passage.* Think about how the passage relates to your life, the world, or God's message. Ask questions like: "What is God saying to me here?"

3. Oratio (Prayer) *Respond to God in prayer—enter into a personal conversation with God.* Speak honestly with God about what you've read and reflected on—**thanksgiving, praise, confession, or requests**. This is more about dialogue than reciting formulas.

4. Contemplatio (Contemplation) *Rest in God's presence to let the Scripture transform your heart and mind.* Be **silent and open**, simply enjoying God's presence without trying to analyse or act. It's a time of spiritual receptivity.

For more information about **Lectio Divina** check out the Universalis app.

For more information or training opportunities for your communities please contact Chris in the Pastoral Development Team: **c.higgins@rcaol.org.uk**



Archdiocese of Liverpool