



Sunday of the Word of God

Sunday, 26 January 2020

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In his Apostolic Letter of 30 September 2019, *Aperuit illis* Pope Francis established that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be the Sunday of the Word of God. It is a day to be devoted to the celebration, study, and spreading of the Word of God. Pope Francis is clear from the very first paragraph of this letter that the relationship between the Risen Lord, a community of believers, and sacred Scripture is essential to who we are as Christians.

Commissioning or Blessing of Readers

In *Aperuit illis* (§3), one of Pope Francis suggestions to celebrate the Sunday of the Word of God is to celebrate the Rite of Installation of Lectors or a commissioning of Readers.

The ministry of Reader in a parish community could well be highlighted on this Sunday. Perhaps a formation session might be organised during this week for readers; new readers could be recruited; or those who have served the community as readers could renew their commitment and new readers begin their ministry. As always, formation for this, or indeed any ministry, is crucial. A parish could have a commissioning of ministers of the Word during the Sunday Eucharist, or may decide to have a prayer of blessing.

An Order for the Blessing of Readers is available in chapter 61 of the Book of Blessings (USA version). Two options are provided: one within the celebration of Mass, and the other within a celebration of the Word of God. Both are parish celebrations, and the blessing is given by the parish priest. After the Prayer of the Faithful, the readers are blessed and may be presented with a lectionary or a Bible.

The following is the prayer of blessing (Prayer of Blessing, n. 1833):

With hands extended over the new readers, the celebrant says immediately:

*Everlasting God,
when he read in the synagogue at Nazareth,
your Son proclaimed
the good news of salvation for which he would give up his life.*

*Bless these readers.
As they proclaim your words of life,
strengthen their faith
that they may read with conviction and boldness,
and put into practice what they read.
We ask this through Christ our Lord...*



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After the Homily, those to be commissioned (or re-commissioned) as parish Readers are presented to the people in these or similar words:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our friends are given the great privilege of proclaiming God's Word in the Assembly. Through them, God will speak to his people of the salvation and redemption won for them by the Lord Jesus, so that, nourished by this word, the people will grow in the love and the knowledge of God.

(The celebrant pauses and then addresses the candidates)

You have been called to proclaim the Word of God in the assembled community of God's people, and in so doing you are sharing in the Church's mission to preach the Good News to all peoples. May God's Word be living and active in your lives, that you may worship the living God in spirit and in truth. In proclaiming God's word to others, accept it yourself in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Meditate on it constantly, so that each day you will have a deeper love for the Scriptures, and in all you say and do, show forth to the world our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

After the address, the candidates stand before the celebrant who asks them these questions:

Are you willing to act as a Minister of the Word and to proclaim God's word to the people assembled in this Church?

(I am)

Are you willing to prepare each proclaiming of God's word by study and prayer?

(I am)

The celebrant then hands a Lectionary or Bible to a representative of (or to all the readers) and prays:

Let us pray to God our loving Father and ask him to bless our brothers and sisters chosen to proclaim His Word:

God our Father, you have given our brothers and sisters faith in you and in your living word. We ask you to help them grow in that faith as they meditate on your word, so that they may worthily proclaim the word to the assembly, and by the manner of their lives. Through Christ our Lord.