



The year of the Word of God – An overview

Pope Francis enriched the liturgy with a "Day of the Word of God", celebrated every third Sunday of the year. In this way, he wishes "to increase in the People of God the familiarity with Sacred Scripture." For "not knowing the Scriptures means not knowing Christ" as the great Bible translator Jerome says. With his translation of the Bible into the popular Latin of his time 1600 years ago, he wanted to make the Scriptures accessible to ordinary people. His jubilee inspired the Catholic Biblical Confederation to celebrate a whole year of the Word of God.

The Year of the Bible has an important ecumenical dimension. Like Hieronymus, Martin Luther wanted with his translation of the Bible into German to give the Word of God back to Christians who no longer understood Latin. The fact that his intention led to a schism in the Church is one of the great tragedies of Church history. With the Constitution "Dei Verbum", the Second Vatican Council wanted to place Scripture again at the centre of the Catholic Church and encourage Catholics to rediscover the Bible.

With these Lenten meditations we want to show the different dimensions of the Word of God and help our readers to deepen their understanding of the "dynamic and spiritual character" of the Bible.

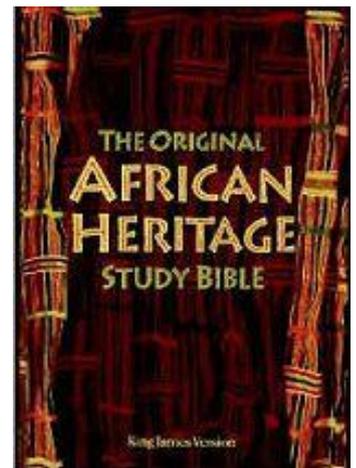
Texts

- The celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God has an ecumenical value, since the Scriptures point out, for those who listen, the path to authentic and firm unity...The Bible is the book of the People of God, which, in listening to Scripture, comes from dispersion and division to unity.
Pope Francis, MP - Motu Proprio Aperuit Illis 3.4
- The relationship between the Risen Lord, the community of believers and sacred Scripture is essential to our identity as Christians... Without the Lord who opens our minds to them, it is impossible to understand the Scriptures in depth. MP 1
- The role of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is primordial. Without the work of the Spirit, there would always be a risk of remaining limited to the written text alone. This would open the way to a fundamentalist reading, which needs to be avoided. MP 9

Learning from Africa

African Christians are much closer to the world of the Bible through their traditional cultures and their way of life than Europeans, who are shaped by the secular, rationalist thinking of the Enlightenment and do not have an direct access to the images and symbols of the Bible. It is sometimes astonishing how people who can hardly read and write find completely new and deep dimensions in biblical texts. The churches in Africa could make an important contribution to rediscover, beyond an academic, intellectual exegesis, the meaning of the Word of God for the concrete realities of life of individuals and communities.

The danger for African Christians is rather to lose the deeper meaning of biblical texts through a literal and fundamentalist reading of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. For most people in Africans religion is part of their lives. That is why biblical texts can be easily misused to legitimize political claims to power, social injustice and personal interests. Sometimes the Bible is also used like a kind of "fetish" to underpin magical ideas.



To think about

- How much space do I give to a meditative reading of Scripture (Lectio Divina) in my life?
- As a community, do we let the Word of God guide us in our decisions?