

The creative power of God's Word

The word is powerful and does what it says. It has the power to change people and communities. In the lives of many saints it was a word of Scripture that touched them deeply and was the beginning of their vocation. Religious communities often express their mission and charism with a quotation from the Bible. The writings of the Jewish and Christian Bible have changed whole societies and created new civilizations, although this is always a slow and never complete process. The Bible is and remains the foundation of the "Christian Occident" and is still formative in our secular society, although most contemporaries are not aware of it.

If we engage with the Word of God, it can become a source of strength for us, "a lamp for our path" and a comfort in dark times. Not only is Holy Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit inspires those who read it attentively and faithfully. The Word of God inspires us to look at the world from a new perspective and see it as a daily gift of God's love. It gives us orientation when we have to take decisions. It challenges us to think creatively and to dare to do new things.

Texts

- For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.. Is 55,11-12
- God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. Gen 1,3
Jesus said: 'I will; be... clean'. And straightway his leprosy was cleansed. Mt 8:3

Learning from Africa

The Bible describes the creation of the world in all its beauty came into existence through a word of God: "Let there be... and there was... and he saw it was good." It is man who brings disorder and chaos into the world: into the family (Cain and Abel, Gen 4), into society (The Tower of Babel, Gen 11) and into the relationship with nature, which becomes man's enemy (The Flood, Gen 6-9). Many African traditions know similar myths about creation and the fall of humanity. God withdraws from the world and leaves people to themselves and the power of threatening spirits.

The life- threatening environmental catastrophes force us to rethink our relationship to nature and to see ourselves not as masters and users of nature, but as part of God's creation and to recognize that all living have their uniqueness, dignity and beauty and are signs of the tender love of the Creator. (cf. Pope Francis, Laudato Si 84-86; 102-106)

We can learn much from "primitive peoples" who still live in harmony with nature. In traditional communities "it is a moral code not to take more from nature than is needed... Earth, forests, rivers and wind and other natural objects are traditionally considered both natural and divine". (Ogungbeni)



Food for thought

- *When in my life have I experienced the power and wisdom of the Word of God?*
- *What are the passages of Scripture that give us inspiration, direction and hope to meet the great challenges of our world and our Church?*