

Word and Eucharist

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." (Mt 9:35) The life of the Church also needs both: proclamation through the word and confirmation of the message through sacramental signs. This unity broke up in the Reformation. The Protestant, especially the Reformed churches, accepted "only Scripture". In response, the Catholic Church overemphasized the sacrament and kept Sacred Scripture away from the laity, considered as too dangerous for them. The ecumenical movement and the Vatican Council were concerned to restore the balance and unity of word and sign, especially in the Eucharist.

Texts

- For the disciples at Emmaus Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures... When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him". Lk 24,30 This scene clearly demonstrates the unbreakable bond between sacred Scripture and the Eucharist. Pope Francis, MP – Motu Proprio Aperuit Illis 6.8
- 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. *Dei Verbum* 21
- As Christians, we are a single people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us. MP 8
- It is important, that in the Eucharistic celebration the sacred text be enthroned, in order to focus the attention of the assembly on the normative value of God's word. MP 3



Learning from Africa

In African religions rituals play a major role. Since their traditional "priests" often used foreign languages in their rituals, the first generations of Christians in Africa had no problem to celebrate Mass in Latin. The decision of the Council to allow the celebration of the liturgy in the native languages triggered a tremendous creative dynamic. Within a few decades, all ethnic groups developed their own lively church music, in which traditional instruments and liturgical dance, which express their deepest emotions, found their place. At important occasions, in the beginning of the Eucharist the Bible is often carried into the church in a solemn procession with dancing and drumming and given a place of honour. When Africans come to Europe and go to Sunday services, they find our liturgy cold, joyless and boring. In contrast, Europeans who attend African masses are touched by the enthusiasm and vitality of the liturgy. What is meaningful to people in one culture cannot be simply transferred to another. But don't we also need to find new ways to express the Gospel message in the culture, language and symbolism of our time?

Food for thought

- How creative are we in our communities when we celebrate our daily liturgy? What images, texts, songs and symbols speak to us today?
- In the future, it will be increasingly difficult for religious communities to find a priest for the Eucharist. What does this mean for communities and parishes without priests?