

Bible Sunday!

Motu Proprio!

Pope Francis, on 30 September 2019, issued the Apostolic Letter: *Apertuit Illis* instituting the Sunday of the Word of God. The Pope has proposed the Third Sunday of the Ordinary Times to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God.

It is undoubtedly true that the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII: *Divinio Affllante Spiritu* (1943) was a great milestone for the scientific study of the Bible, and the Dogmatic Constitution of Vat II *Dei Verbum* (1965) was a great boost to understand the nature and its importance in the life of the Church. This document clearly expounds the nature of Sacred Scripture, its transmission from generation to generation, its divine inspiration and the importance of the Bible in the life of the Church. As a result of the Synod of Bishops (2008) on “The Word of God in the life and Mission of the Church” Pope Benedict XVI issued the Apostolic Exhortation: *Verbum Domini* in which he emphasised the sacramental character of the Word of God. Now, Pope Francis, for the first time in the history of the Church, officially institutes a Sunday for the celebration of the Bible.

Risen Lord: the Way!

Quite true! The Pope begins his letter with the mission of the Risen Lord to the disciples of Jesus in the words of “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Lk 24:45). Referring to Scriptures the Risen Lord unveiled the minds of those disciples to understand the great mystery of the Resurrection. Through this event the Pope reminds us that without the Scriptures, the events of the mission of Jesus and of the Church in the world remain incomprehensible. Of course, we should remember the words of St. Peter: “No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20). Also, taking into account the mysterious and salvific nature of Holy Scriptures, the Pope encourages us to allot a special day for the Bible so that we can imbibe the spirit of God’s revelation, not only for our personal life but also for the benefit of the world at large.

Program of Bible Sunday!

The Bible is the book of the Lord’s people. It is not private property. This Sunday is meant, first of all, to celebrate the gift of the Word of God to the world. The importance of the Word of God, in one’s daily life, not just as spiritual food, but as divine light to individual, family and social life, is to be proclaimed on that day. Quoting his earlier exhortation (*EG 142*), Pope Francis emphasizes the importance to a meaningful homily which is the only “opportunity they have to grasp the beauty of God’s Word and to see it applied to their daily lives.” On this day the properly-trained-lectors and special ministers of the Word of God could be installed for efficient proclamation of the Word of God in the

Liturgy and in the community. This will help the people to draw daily nourishment from the Word of God.

The pastors could find ways and means to impart understanding of the importance to the Bible in personal and family life and to disseminate the texts of the Word of God, not only to the faithful, but also to all those of good will. This Sunday will help the people to grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures, for the “Word is in your mouth, in your heart for your observance” (Deut 30:14).

In India, in many ecclesiastical regions, we have already been observing Bible Sunday and in some States we do so on a very large scale. However, this is the first time there is an official exhortation to observe universally a Sunday for the celebration of the Bible. May this exhortation encourage us in our ministry of the Word of God in all the Dioceses in India.

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