



The Holy See

SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD
JUBILEE OF THE WORLD OF COMMUNICATION

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Saint Peter's Basilica
III Sunday in Ordinary Time, 26 January 2025*

[Multimedia]

The Gospel we have heard tells of the fulfilment of a prophecy overflowing with the Holy Spirit. It is fulfilled by the One who comes “with the power of the Spirit” (*Lk 4:14*): Jesus, the Saviour.

The Word of God is alive: down the centuries, it accompanies us and by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is at work in every age. For the Lord is always faithful to his promise, which, in his love for humanity, he always keeps. This is exactly what Jesus says in the synagogue in Nazareth: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (*Lk 4:21*).

Sisters and brothers, what a happy coincidence! On the Sunday of the Word of God, at the beginning of this Jubilee Year, we proclaim this page of Luke’s Gospel, in which Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah, “anointed” (v. 18) and sent to “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (v. 19)! Jesus is the living Word in whom all the Scriptures find their fulfilment. In the *today* of the sacred Liturgy, we are his contemporaries; we too, filled with amazement, open our hearts and minds to listen to him, for “it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7). I said a word: amazement. When we hear the Gospel, the words of God, it is not simply a matter of listening to or understanding them, no. They must reach our hearts and bring about what I said, “amazement”. The word of God always amazes us; it always renews us. It enters our hearts and always renews us.

In this spirit of exultant faith, we are invited to accept the ancient prophecy as coming from the very Heart of Christ, and to reflect on *five actions* that characterize the unique and universal mission of the Messiah. A unique mission, because he alone can fulfil it; a universal mission, because he wants to involve everyone in it.

First, Jesus was anointed “*to bring good news to the poor*” (v. 18). This is the “gospel”, the good news, which Jesus proclaims: the Kingdom of God is at hand! When God reigns, we are saved. The Lord comes to visit his people, caring for the lowly and the wretched. The Gospel is a *word of compassion*; it calls us to exercise charity, to forgive our neighbour’s debts and to be generous in serving others. Let us not forget that the Lord is close, merciful and compassionate. God’s style is one of closeness, mercy and compassion.

Christ’s second action is to “*proclaim release to the captives*” (v. 18). Brothers, sisters, evil’s days are numbered, because the future belongs to God. With the power of the Spirit, Jesus redeems us from all guilt and liberates our hearts from all that holds them in bondage, for he brings the Father’s forgiveness into the world. The Gospel is a *word of mercy*, which calls us to become passionate witnesses of peace, solidarity and reconciliation.

The third action with which Jesus fulfils the prophecy is to grant “*recovery of sight to the blind*” (v. 18). The Messiah opens the eyes of our heart, all too often dazzled by the allure of power and vain things: the diseases of the soul that prevent us from acknowledging God’s presence and hide from our gaze the weak and the suffering. The Gospel is a *word of light*, which beckons us to the truth and calls us to bear witness to our faith and to be consistent in its practice.

Jesus’ fourth action is to “*let the oppressed go free*” (v. 18). No form of bondage can resist the work of the Messiah, who makes us brothers and sisters in his name. The prisons of persecution and the dungeons of death are flung full open by the passionate power of God. The Gospel is a *word of freedom*, calling us to conversion of heart, integrity of mind and perseverance in trial.

Lastly, the fifth action: Jesus was sent “*to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour*” (v. 19). That year is a new age, an age that does not devour life, but regenerates it. It is a “Jubilee”, and in this sense, like the one we now celebrate as a way of preparing in hope for our definitive encounter with the Redeemer. The Gospel is a *word of joy*, summoning us to mutual acceptance and fellowship, as we make our pilgrim journey towards the Kingdom of God.

By these five actions, Jesus even now fulfils Isaiah’s prophecy. By releasing us from our captivity, he tells us that God draws close to us in our poverty, redeems us from evil, enlightens our eyes, breaks the yoke of oppression, and brings us into the joy of a time and greater history in which he makes himself constantly present, to walk beside us and to guide us to eternal life. True, the salvation he bestows on us is not yet fully realized. We know this. Yet wars, injustice, pain and death will not have the final word. The Gospel never disappoints.

Brothers and sisters, on the Sunday devoted in a special way to the word of God, let us thank the Father for having spoken to us by his own Word, made flesh for the salvation of the world. All the Scriptures, which have human writers and the Holy Spirit as their true authors (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 11), point to this event. The whole Bible speaks of Christ and his work, which the Spirit makes present and active in our lives and in history. When we read the Scriptures, when we pray and study them, we do not simply receive information about God; we receive his Spirit, who reminds us of all that Jesus said and did (cf. *Jn* 14:26). In this way, our hearts, inflamed by faith, wait in hope for the coming of God. Brothers, sisters, we must become more familiar with reading the Scriptures. I would like to suggest that all of us get a small, pocket-sized copy of the Gospels or the New Testament. We could always have it with us in a bag so that we can read it at various points throughout the day. One verse, two verses so that throughout the day we will have contact with the Lord. A small copy of the Gospels is enough.

Let us respond with enthusiasm to the good news of Christ! For the Lord has not spoken to us as silent listeners, but as his witnesses, called to evangelize at all times and in every place. Today, forty brothers and sisters from various parts of the world have come to receive the ministry of Lector. Thank you! We are grateful to them and we pray for them. We are all praying for you. Let us commit ourselves to bringing the good news to the poor, proclaiming release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, letting the oppressed go free and announcing the year of the Lord's favour. Then yes, sisters and brothers, we will transform the world in accordance with the will of God, who created it and redeemed it in his immense love. Thank you!