
The Word of God, an antidote to indifference

The Italian Church celebrated the Sunday of the Word of God, proposed by Pope Francis at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, subsequently instituted with the apostolic letter "Aperuit illis". A Sunday dedicated entirely to the Word of God: "not as a yearly event but rather a yearlong event."

The President of the Italian Bishops, Card. Gualtiero Bassetti, introducing the works of the Permanent Council, had expressed his wholehearted support to this proposal as an opportunity to rediscover the centrality of the Word of God and "to recover personal and communal encounter with the Word. A Word that is never obvious, never ordinary, an inexhaustible treasure, whose richness and depth is impossible to grasp." Moreover, the President reiterated that "every disciple lives of the Word; for the Word believes; the Word is the foundation of piety, catechesis and lived faith; from the Word the gestures of charity are poured out onto others thereby generating and regenerating the community."

Hence, the auspices of this occasion not being just one of many events. Returning to the source of the Good News is the only option to rediscover vitality, courage and the desire to live personally and communally the awareness of God walking with us and with every human being in daily life.

The Word of God is an antidote so as not to succumb to indifference or self-centeredness with respect to a daily reality longing for good news. This is the mission of the Christian community: to foster the encounter between the Word of God and every man and woman. It's the key to regenerating credible communities and authoritative witnesses. However, the ability to listen is critical to being provocatively inspired by the Word.

The human person listens already in his mother's womb. Authentic listening produces transformations, putting man in the condition to step outside himself to meet the Other and his fellow others. Listening becomes obedience, not in the moral sense but in the ability to embrace a life-giving word. Likewise, there can be no dialogue without listening.

Today we see an evident growth of a culture of listening: everyone wants to speak but probably not with the same eagerness to listen to the other person.

We tend to forget that listening and being listened to means being present. The acceptance of our fellow other starts with listening. Listening requires the other person to be embraced with patience, leaving him/her space, dedicating time to him/her with utmost humbleness and openness.

In the book of Revelation, the author, addressing the Christian communities of his time, recalls the tenderness of the Word of God requiring attention: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me" (Rev 3:20). The Sunday of the Word of God should spawn and nourish this awareness: God is present, at the threshold of the door of each person's life, gently offering beautiful gestures and words. But the other aspect is that

God only enters with respect for the freedom of his creature and if His creature allows Him to enter.

It's the dynamic of Christian life, of mission, of Evangelization: God and the human person speaking and listening to each other. At a closer glance, returning without delay to the source, to the Word of God, as the Second Vatican Council called for, is the only possible path leading to indispensable personal and communal renewal.

() Director of the Italian Bishops' Conference Catechetical Office*

Valentino Bulgarelli