

Things to talk about

- Which passages from the Bible best help *you* to an understanding of God and of God's plan for us? What passages best express the meaning and teaching of Jesus?
- What passages of scripture have been a help and guide to you in living faithfully - as an individual or a family?
- What helps you to listen to the Lord? At Mass? In private prayer? In the various experiences of life? And what hinders that listening?

If you wish to gather with others for a more formal time of reflection based on these questions then you might like to download a group reflection resource from www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy

Things to do

- Read the Gospel of the day before you go to Mass. That reading is often the key to understanding the other readings and prayers of the Mass.
- When listening to or reading the scriptures, listen out for the word, or phrase or sentence that particularly strikes you. It might be a word of encouragement or of challenge. But if it strikes home it has something to say to you. Allow the word space to speak to you; ponder it in your heart; and then bring your response to the word to the Lord in prayer.
- Many people find it is easier to listen to the Scriptures in a group. The discipline of being with others helps sustain a time of meditation; hearing how the word speaks to others can help us to better appreciate its richness. Simple guidelines for scripture groups can be downloaded from the *Praying the Mass* section of the diocesan website. Parish readers in particular can find such groups a great assistance as they take up their responsibility of ministering the word in their parish.



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Additional resources can be accessed at www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy

Praying the Mass 2

At Mass so much happens. Sometimes we are aware of it, sometimes it passes us by. Sometimes Mass is so busy, we hardly find time and space to pray.

Praying the Mass seeks to unite all the members of the Diocese in a time of rediscovering the Mass and its meaning.

Each month between now and June there will be a leaflet like this one for us all. Please take it away to read and reflect on it. You might do this in a faith-sharing group, or as a family or with friends. You might even do it by yourself. If you have a ministry at Mass, let the leaflet help you look again at what you do and how you do it. But the leaflet is for us all, because the Mass is for us all, and we all have our own particular responsibility for how Mass is prayed in our parishes.

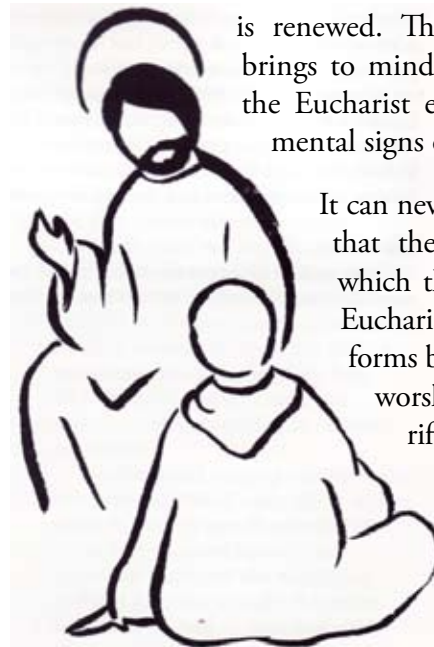
Fed by the living Word

The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God's word and at the table of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the

Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy.

It can never be forgotten, therefore, that the celebration of Mass in which the word is heard and the Eucharist is offered and received forms but one single act of divine worship. That act offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God's creatures the fullness of redemption.

Introduction to the Lectionary 10.



Living

The Scriptures provide guidance on countless contemporary issues: the rights and responsibilities of the human person, the value of human life from conception to death, the need to protect the created world, the search for lasting justice and peace for all peoples. The gospel of Jesus in particular teaches the value of each and every person, the love with which each person is to be cherished, and the trust we should have in the God whose 'steadfast love lasts for ever' (Psalm 136/135.).

In our day the Scriptures are sometimes misunderstood as undermining and even stifling human freedom and growth. They are in fact the way of truth which leads to true freedom (John 8:32). They are often considered outdated and irrelevant. They are in fact words of life, always relevant, always new, with the power to change and renew people's lives (Hebrews 4:12). Above all, in the Scriptures we find not dead letters, but Christ, the eternal Word of the living God. In the Scriptures it is Jesus, the incarnate Word, who comes to meet us, for all Sacred Scripture speaks to us of Christ (cf *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 108, 134).

*The Gift of Scripture, 70
The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales*

Praying

The Lord speaks to us in so many ways - through events in life, through the sacraments, and in the words of Scripture. His speaking to us is never in doubt. More in question is our ability to listen to him, and our readiness to respond to what we hear.

Often we think of prayer as time when we speak to God. But of equal importance, and often the place for starting our time of prayer, is having time of quiet listening. Prayer is a time of communication: and communication thrives on a mutual speaking and a mutual listening.

We might begin a time of prayer by reading a passage of scripture (often the Sunday Gospel or Sunday Psalm is a good place to start). We listen to the words but also to the One who speaks with us through them. The time of reading is then usefully followed by a time of quiet, either just 'holding' the word or phrase that has caught our attention, or quietly pondering on it.

After such a time of quiet, our dialogue with the Lord might then commence - speaking with him about what he has said to us; bringing to him the things which concern and preoccupy us; giving thanks for his goodness and love.

Celebrating together

Let us recall the words of Saint Elizabeth: 'Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord' (Lk 1:45).

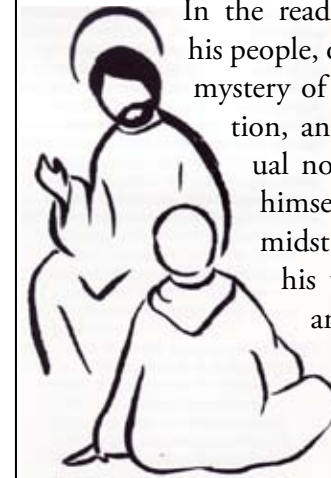
Mary is blessed because she has faith, because she believed, and in this faith she received the Word of God into her womb in order to give him to the world. The joy born of the Word can now expand to all those who, by faith, let themselves be changed by God's word.

I turn to every man and woman, including those who have fallen away from the Church, who have left the faith or who have never heard the proclamation of salvation. To everyone the Lord says: '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).

Let us be silent in order to hear the Lord's word and to meditate upon it, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit it may remain in our hearts and speak to us all the days of our lives.

Pope Benedict XVI, Verbum Domini, 124

The Liturgy of the Word



In the readings... God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. By their silence and singing the people make God's word their own... Finally, having been nourished by it, they pour

out their petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

Silence

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided.

During the Liturgy of the Word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal 55-56