

BIBLE SUNDAY - 2020

(Based on *Aperuit Illis* of Pope Francis on Instituting the Sunday of the Word of God)

THEME: BIBLE: THE BOOK OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Introduction

“With this Letter, I wish to respond to the many requests I have received from the people of God that the entire Church celebrate, in unity of purpose, a Sunday of the Word of God. ... Consequently, I hereby declare that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God.” (*Aperuit Illis* no. 2 -3). With these words Pope Francis has instituted the Sunday of the word of God. Earlier he has expressed his desire saying, “I greatly desire that God’s word be increasingly celebrated, known and disseminated” (*Misericordia et misera* no.7). His desire has seen the day of light.

In India, responding positively, and with enthusiasm to the call of the Holy Father, this Sunday is celebrated nationwide as Sunday of the Word of God. The theme for this year (2020) is “Bible: The Book of God’s People”.

The Purpose of Sunday of the Word of God

- “To enable the Church to experience anew, how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world.” (*Aperuit Illis* no.2)
- To be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God. (*Aperuit Illis* no. 3)
- To revive the importance of the Bible in Christian life.
- To promote Biblical Pastoral Ministry in every parish and every diocese of India.

These guidelines and materials (Apostolic letter of the Pope, write up of the Chairman of the CCBI Commission for Bible, Poster, Bible Sunday Liturgy) are meant to help, to be a source of inspiration and model to plan and celebrate the Bible Sunday. The Regional Bible Commissions are free to adapt and to translate according to their need.

I. Preparations for Bible Sunday / Week

- a. Parish Priests and Heads of institutions to be informed in advance, the date of Bible Sunday or Bible Week.
- b. Copies of the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis, *Aperuit Illis* made available to the people in the language of the place or region.
- c. A Pastoral letter or Circular by the Regional Bishop’s Council or Chairman of the Regional Bible Commission regarding the Bible Sunday celebration to be read in all the Churches and Institutions at least on the Sunday prior to the Bible Sunday.
- d. Posters, Handbills and WhatsApp messages announcing the various features and programs of Bible Sunday celebrations to be distributed or passed on to the Parishes and parishioners.

II. On the day of Bible Sunday

- a. Wall-posters and flexes to be put up.
- b. In order to create a festive atmosphere, singing of religious hymns with Biblical themes and the reading of selected passages from the Bible through the public address system are to be encouraged before and /or after the Eucharistic celebration.
- c. A special mass approved by the CCBI Commission for Bible specifically for this Sunday to be celebrated solemnly with an entrance procession of, either Book of the Gospels or Lectionary from a public place or within the campus – The Enthronement of the Bible in the Parish Church and Substations (cf. Aperuit Illis, no.3)- offering Bibles during the offertory procession for the poor.
- d. The homily should particularly emphasise the honor which due to the Word of God. The Pope says, “pastors are primarily responsible for explaining sacred Scripture and helping everyone to understand it.”(Aperuit Illis no. 5)
- e. “Bishops could celebrate the Rite of Installation of Lectors or a similar commissioning of readers, in order to bring out the importance of the proclamation of God’s word in the liturgy.”(Aperuit Illis, no. 3)
- f. Special trainings could be organised for the faithful who proclaim the word of God as it is done in the case of Acolytes or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. (cf. Aperuit Illis no. 3).
- g. Bible exhibition based on Salvation history or Books of the Bible or various themes from the Bible can be arranged.
- h. A stall where copies of the Bible, extracts from the Bible, and literature on the Bible be made available at a cheaper and affordable rate. Special editions of the Bible such as Bible for kids, children, youth, family and senior citizens are to be made available. The Holy Father urges saying, “Since it is the people’s book, those called to be ministers of the word must feel an urgent need to make it accessible to their community.” (Aperuit Illis no. 5)
- i. “Pastors can also find ways of giving a Bible, or one of its books, to the entire assembly as a way of showing the importance of learning how to read, appreciate and pray daily with sacred Scripture, especially through the practice of *lectio divina*.”(Aperuit Illis, no. 3).
- j. An evening with or on the Bible can be organized according to the local conditions and convenience presenting Biblical messages in different art forms, public speeches on biblical themes, testimonies of people reading Bible and living the Biblical values, recitation of key passages of the Bible, Biblical games, Bible quiz, debate based on the Biblical themes, Biblical competition involving people of different levels, Bible Songs, Bible drama/play, Dance program or competition on Biblical themes (such as essays, poems, fancy dress, songs, elocution), Bible videos, Bible films. Copies of the Bible can be given as a prize.
- k. Continuous reading of the Bible (marathon reading), Bible *Katha* or Jesus *Katha*.

III. Spreading the Word of God throughout the year

In his Apostolic Letter the Holy Father asserts saying, “A day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event,” (Aperuit Illis no. 8). Therefore, the Biblical Pastoral ministry should be carried out, not only on this Sunday but throughout the year. Here are some suggestions for this effect.

1. Biblical formation programs: Talks on the Bible or Biblical themes, Biblical prayer services, Bible Study groups, Bible sharing groups, Bible Seminars for groups and associations in the parish (one Sunday every month). Bible Camps for the youth.
2. Enthronement of the Bible in the families presided over by the parish priest or head of the family. Reading the Bible during family prayer and family events. *Lectio Divina* in the parishes, families and religious institutions.
3. Visiting families in the neighbourhood to encourage reading of the Bible and to pray with them for their needs and intentions.
4. Bible Banks can be established (pooling money or copies of the Bible from people as donation and donating Bible, either freely or at a concessional rate to those who cannot afford to buy).
5. Giving copies of the Bible as gifts during birthday, First holy Communion, Confirmation, wedding and jubilee celebrations; Presenting the Bible to students who complete their school or college studies; Forming Bible study groups in schools and colleges; Giving a Bible each to the sick, prisoners etc.
6. VBS (Vocational Bible School) can be conducted for the school going children during summer vacations.
7. Reading Bible during a journey will have witness value to others; Reading Bible as spiritual reading and praying the prayers found in the Bible (eg. Gen 18:16-33 (intercession of Abraham); Ex 15:1-8 (song of Moses); 1Kings 8:1-53 (prayer of Solomon); Dan 3:26-45 (prayer of Azariah), 52-90 (Song of the three Jews); Book of Psalms; Lk 1:46-55 (Mary’s Song of Praise), 68-79 (Zechariah’s song); 2:14 (song of the angels), 29-32 (Simeon’s song); Jn 17 (Jesus’ prayer for the disciples); Phil 2:6-11 (Christological Hymn) etc.).
8. Publishing literatures such as introduction series and commentaries related to the books of the Bible, monthly magazines and pamphlets on themes and messages of the Bible, Bible diary, and Bible Calendar with liturgical readings; Writing on selected books of the Bible or the whole Bible.
9. Initiating Postal Bible Correspondence Course (BCC) and Online Bible Course.
10. Reading verses from the Bible at the school assembly; Writing Bible Quotes on the compound walls of our institutions. Scrolling or running verses from the Bible through Digital screens. Creating Bible comics, cartoons and memes to attract children and the youth towards Bible reading.

11. Writing articles in secular and religious magazines on Biblical themes and values.
12. Establishing a Biblical library in the diocese and/or parishes.
13. Conducting Bible *Mahautzav* (festival) with flag hoisting and Bible Car procession; Gospel conventions; Village Bible Proclamation. Street plays and street dances in Malls and markets on various themes based on Biblical messages.
14. Retreats in the dioceses and parishes on Biblical themes and virtues.
15. Training priests for scripture-based homily, training the laity as lectors with basic knowledge of the Bible, liturgy and techniques relating to proclamation of the word of God.
16. Using mass and social media to spread messages of the Bible through WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, YouTube, blog, e-group, website (cf. www.ccbibible.in), online radio, television channels etc; Creating an App to use Bible in the Android and iPhone; Conducting singing and dance competitions on biblical passages in Catholic Television Channels and / or You Tube channels.
17. Creating structures of Biblical Pastoral Ministry at the diocesan, deanery and parish levels such as Bible Commission, Basic Bible Communities, friends of the Bible, Lay Volunteers of Bible Ministry etc.

The Sunday of the Word of God Celebration (2020)

Theme: BIBLE: THE BOOK OF GOD'S PEOPLE

1. Introductory Rite

Commentator: The Holy Father has instituted the Sunday of the Word of God. Through this Sunday, he wants us “to experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world.” (Aperuit Illis, no. 2). The Word of God is efficacious and has the tremendous power to transform our lives and unite us, as God’s People. As we begin the celebration of the Eucharist, let us keep our minds, hearts and ears open, to hear the word of God and become a community that listens. Let us rise for the entrance Hymn.

2. The Entrance Processional Hymn:

(A suitable hymn is chosen according to the theme)

(When the Entrance hymn begins, the celebrant accompanied by altar servers and/ or lectors proceeds from the main entrance of the church to the sanctuary. The Bible is carried at the head of the procession followed by those carrying lamps and a garland. The celebrant alone goes up to the sanctuary while others wait at the foot of the sanctuary).

3. Solemn Enthronement of the Bible:

Commentator: The first reading for today narrates how Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law, that is the Bible, and read it for the people assembled in Jerusalem. Now we pay our reverence to the Word of God by enthroning it and garlanding it.

(The celebrant receives the Bible and places it on a decorated ambo and garlands it. Homage can be done by arati / incense according to local customs. As a sign of veneration, devotion and love for the Word of God all extend their hands towards the Bible enthroned and take the blessings from it.)

4. Greetings

C: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R: Amen.

C: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

R: And with your spirit.

5. Penitential Act:

6. The Gloria

7. Collect (Third Sunday in Ordinary Time):

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

**Almighty ever-living God,
Direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son,
the Word dwelt among us,
we may abound in good works.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.**

R/- Amen

8. The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Neh 8:1-12

Responsorial Psalm:

Ps 119:103-109, 111-112

Response: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore, I hate every false way.

Response: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.

Response: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O LORD, according to your word.
Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD,
and teach me your ordinances.

Response: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

Response: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Second Reading: 2Tim 3:14-17

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia! The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing until it divides soul from spirit. Alleluia!

Gospel Reading: Mt 13: 44 - 52

Homily:

Prayer of the Faithful:

Celebrant:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Our God is a God of Promises; He not only makes promises
but also keeps His promises. Trusting in his promises, let us now put forth our pleas and petitions.

Response: Lord, Help us to understand the Bible.

1. God our Loving Father, you chose the Universal Church as you once chose the people of Israel.
As they were the People of the Book, May we too realize that we have received the greatest treasure,

Bible which is the Book of the Lord's People, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, Help us to understand the Bible.

2. God our Healer, May Pope Francis, our Bishops, Priests, Deacons and the Religious and specially those who are associated with the proclamation of the Word of God realise that, Bible is the only medicine for the broken world, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, Help us to understand the Bible.

3. God our Master, May all the national, regional and the diocesan commissions for Bible realise the great responsibility entrusted to them that is, to make the people come to the knowledge of the treasures of the Scripture, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, Help us to understand the Bible.

4. God our divine revelation, we pray for all of us gathered here.

That we may understand the treasures which the Bible contains, read it, meditate on it, reflect on it and bear fruit in hundredfold in our day today life. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, Help us to understand the Bible.

5. God of youthfulness, may the youth who are the Church of today be enlightened and understand that the Word of God is indeed the true treasure that they need to possess.

This enlightenment may make them to bring healing and well-being to the world that is running after the material and worldly pleasures, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, Help us to understand the Bible.

Celebrant:

God the true treasure of all of us,

your son taught us to first seek the kingdom of God and all will be added unto us.

May we always remain faithful to the treasure that you handed down to us

by always holding it close to our hearts and constantly reading and meditating on it

and persistently putting it into action in our day to day life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/- Amen.

9. Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory procession:

Along with gifts of bread and wine, copies of the Bible may be offered by those who can afford (in view of distributing them to the poor families.)

Prayer over the Offerings:

**Accept our offerings, O Lord, we pray,
and in sanctifying them
grant that they may profit us
to know your revelation for salvation
Through Christ our Lord.**

R/- Amen

Eucharistic Prayer:

Prayer after Communion:

**Merciful Father,
Having fed us with the Body and Blood of your Son,
Grant, we pray,
that, receiving the grace of your revelation
by which you bring us to new life,
we may always glory in your gift.
Through Christ our Lord.**

R/- Amen

10. Concluding rites

Solemn Blessings:

(Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.)

May God the Father, who speaks to us through the Sacred Scriptures, strengthen you.

R/- Amen.

May God the Son, who is the Word become flesh, be with you to unite you as God's People.

R/- Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who came upon Mother Mary and Apostles enable you to comprehend the plan of God and empower you.

R/- Amen.

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

R/- Amen.

Celebrant: Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.

Prepared by: CCBI Commission for Bible, Bangalore.