



Te Tari Ā Motu Mō Ngā Ritenga
THE NATIONAL LITURGY OFFICE
New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

10 January 2020

A note to priests for the Inaugural Word of God Sunday
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, 26 January 2020
from John O'Connor, Acting Director of National Liturgy Office.

Dear brothers

On the 1600th anniversary of the death of St. Jerome (30 September 2019) Pope Francis inaugurated the Third Sunday of Ordinary time each year to be **Word of God Sunday**. He had indicated his intention to do this at the end of the Year of Mercy proposing “a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people” (*Misericordia et Misera*, 7).

The first **Word of God** Sunday occurs later this month on 26 January 2020.

On first glance the timing might seem less than ideal for us in New Zealand as the school and work year begins. At first this seemed good reason to consider allocating **Word of God** Sunday to a more suitable time of the year. But perhaps the timing is ideal giving us an opportunity to prioritise the **Word of God** right at the start of the year.

Pope Francis has invited people to carry a pocket gospel with them every day and to take a moment or two often to read a passage and to pray with the scriptures. Smart Phones make it even easier to do this through convenient scripture and reflection *Apps*.

However we find that the demands and busyness of life means that too few of our parishioners take the time to do this.

Even as priests it is too easy to turn to a Google search for homily ideas instead of sitting in silent prayer to ponder the scriptures alongside our computer exegesis in preparation for a homily. Pope Francis challenges us priests.

Some suggestions for making this Sunday with reference to the complete text of Pope Francis' *Motu Proprio* is [here](#).

1. For the liturgies of this Sunday “It is important that in the Eucharistic celebration the sacred text be enthroned, in order to focus the attention of the assembly on the normative value of God’s word.”

2. Take the opportunity on **Word of God** Sunday to pray for those who are entrusted with reading the Scriptures at Mass. Suggested prayer format. *See attached file* .
3. At the start of the year let us re-commit ourselves to a faithful and impassioned preaching of the **Word of God**, using the scriptures of the following Sunday as our default companion for daily reflection and ministry. During the week speak with other priests to share the fruits of your reflection and invite parishioners to share with you both in conversation and even email their own reflections for the following Sunday's readings.
4. Invite parishioners to carry the **Word of God** with them, either in a small pocket gospel or an *App* saved to the home screen of their smartphone.
5. While weekly parish newsletters need to serve as a parish notice board, perhaps some space could be given every week to a reflection on the scriptures of the Sunday. We could invite parishioners who have a reputation for prayer and sound scriptural knowledge to take turns at writing these reflections. There are also some websites that offer free sharing of reflections.
6. As a support for our ministry of preaching, resources for each Sunday will regularly be uploaded to the National Liturgy Office website www.nlo.org.nz. Please send any resources that you find helpful in your preparation for preaching to liturgy@nzcbc.org.nz

A separate letter has been emailed from your Diocesan office to all parish administrators and school leaders. This includes information about the inaugural **Word of God** Sunday, text for inserting into parish newsletters, and ideas for parishioners and teachers for growing a heightened awareness and love of the scriptures.

In Christ



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