

Theme: "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

Pope Francis declared the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as "Word of God Sunday" on September 30, 2019. September 30 is the memorial of St. Jerome, one of the great Scripture scholars. It is a day devoted to the celebration, study, and dissemination of the Word of God. He says: "A day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event, for we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of Scripture and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers." Pope Francis reminds me of the beautiful wisdom of St. Jerome who said: "Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Christ." We have Bible Study in our Parish every Thursday at 10:30am and a Women's Bible Study on Monday 6:30pm. You're most welcome to join us. There are many resources also on the Bible Study on our Formed platform. Fr. Mike Schmitz and his "The Bible in a Year" is an excellent resource for Bible Study.

Monday is a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children in the US. Beloved, let us continue to pray that a day will come when every child of God will have a right to be born and live just like you and me. Let us pray for those who are working to protect and save these precious angels of God. We pray for God's forgiveness and healing for all those who promote abortions or have committed abortions. May God grant these unborn children/aborted children eternal rest. Let us also pray for respect and love for our elderly people, people with disabilities, the sick, homebound, and Mother Earth, for everyone is a precious child of God. We pray for our lawmakers in our great state of West Virginia that they do not bring back death penalty.

"Repent and believe in the Gospel" is my theme for this Word of God Sunday. The Greek term "Metanoia" as translated "Repentance" in the English language and refers to a "change of thinking" based on a new horizon of understanding grounded in an act of God. Beloved, all authentic conversion requires a total change in lifestyle and value. It demands openness, honesty, humility, and above all courage, courage to end self-deception and confront the painful realities of life. That is why conversion/repentance is a challenge, difficult but worth doing it.

In the first reading, the prophet Jonah gives us the people of Nineveh as a perfect example of repentance and a belief in the Word of God. Jonah was sent by God to the people of Nineveh. Jonah announced to the Ninevites: "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The Word of God tells us that the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth." Fellow parishioners, even though the people of Nineveh were enemies of the Jews, they responded to Jonah, his Jewish prophet's message, and repented, even with their animals (Jonah 3:8). The Word of God tells us: "When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he (God) repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out." Beloved, God loves us so much that he is willing and ready to forgive us if we sincerely repent from our sins and return to him. He does not want us to die in sin and end up in hell. He wants all his beloved children to come to his Kingdom.

As you heard in Mark's Gospel, Jesus begins his public ministry with a call to repent and believe in the Gospel. Jesus knows very well, one can't be his true disciples without turning away from his/her old lifestyle. I believe that is why, before calling his disciples, he preached on a call to repent and then believe in the Gospel. It is interesting to see how we begin each Mass with a similar call with the invitation to call to mind our sins and to repent of them. Beloved, Christian life is a constant and continuous process of conversion. God's kingdom demands a total reorientation of life, as John had already made it clear to us (John 1:4). Jesus' call to repentance is addressed to all Christians if only you want to be his true brother/sister. There is what I will refer to as his second Call that is addressed to those whom God calls to a life of service in ministerial priesthood, religious life, or permanent diaconate. Mark tells us as Jesus passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea and invited them. Then, the next invitation went to the two sons of Zebedee, James, and John. They immediately left their dad and became disciples of Jesus. When Jesus calls you, he wants you to abandon everything and make him the center of your life. That is what all his disciples who later became his apostles did and Jesus continues to ask us also to do the same.

In the second reading, St. Paul thought the world was coming to an end, hence he asked the Corinthians to have an attitude of detachment from the things of this world and live as though the only thing that counts is the Kingdom of God. We can adhere to Paul's advice only if we truly repent, believe in the Gospel of Christ, and live entirely for Jesus. Then, we are not far from the Kingdom of God.

May Mother Mary and St. Joseph, her beloved husband, continue to intercede for us so that one day we will all be with them and all our beloved ones who have gone before us in heaven. Amen