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# APERUIT ILLIS

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## SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD



**EXTRACTS FROM THE APOSTOLIC LETTER  
BY POPE FRANCIS**

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## "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." – LUKE 24.45

This was one of the final acts of the risen Lord before his Ascension. The relationship between the Risen Lord, the community of believers and sacred Scripture is essential to our identity as Christians. Without the Lord who opens our minds to them, it is impossible to understand the Scriptures in depth. Yet the contrary is equally true: without the Scriptures, the events of the mission of Jesus and of his Church in this world would remain incomprehensible.

The word of God unites believers and makes them one people.

The Bible, as sacred Scripture, speaks of Christ and proclaims him as the one who had to endure suffering and then enter into his glory (cf. v. 26: *Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?*).

Not simply a part, but the whole of Scripture speaks of Christ. Apart from the Scriptures, his death and resurrection cannot be rightly understood. That is why one of the most ancient confessions of faith stressed that *"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..."* (1Cor 15:3-5).

A profound bond links sacred Scripture and the faith of believers (cf. *Rom 10:17: Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.*)

The journey that the Risen Lord makes with the disciples of Emmaus ended with a meal. The mysterious wayfarer accepts their insistent request: *"Stay with us, for it is almost evening and the day is now far spent"* (Lk 24:29). When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him (cf. v. 30-31).

This scene clearly demonstrates the unbreakable bond between sacred Scripture and the Eucharist. Regular reading of sacred Scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist make it possible for us to see ourselves as part of one another. As Christians, we are a single people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us.

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 the Scriptures and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers. For this reason, we need to develop a closer relationship with sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, struck as we are by so many forms of blindness.

In the Second Letter to Timothy, which is in some ways his spiritual testament, Saint Paul urges his faithful co-worker to have constant recourse to

sacred Scripture. The Apostle is convinced that *“all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness”* (3:16). Paul’s exhortation to Timothy emphasizes the Scriptures’ saving purpose, spiritual dimension and inherent incarnational principle.

The Bible is not a collection of history books or a chronicle, but is aimed entirely at the integral salvation of the person. The evident historical setting of the books of the Bible should not make us overlook their primary goal, which is our salvation. Everything is directed to this purpose and essential to the very nature of the Bible, which takes shape as a history of salvation in which God speaks and acts in order to encounter all men and women and to save them from evil and death.

To achieve its saving purpose, sacred Scripture, by the working of the Holy Spirit, makes human words written in human fashion become the word of God. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is primordial. As the Apostle reminds us: *“The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”* (2 Cor 3:6). The Holy Spirit, then, makes sacred Scripture the living word of God, experienced and handed down in the faith of his holy people.

The work of the Holy Spirit has to do not only with the formation of sacred Scripture; it is also operative in those who hear the word of God. God’s revelation attains its completion and fullness in Jesus Christ; nonetheless, the Holy Spirit does not cease to act. We need to have confidence in the working of the Holy Spirit as he continues in his own way to provide “inspiration” whenever the Church teaches the sacred Scriptures, and whenever each believer makes them the norm of his or her spiritual life.

In this sense, we can understand the words spoken by Jesus to his disciples when they told him that they now understood the meaning of his parables: *“Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old”* (Mt 13:52).

When sacred Scripture is read in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written, it remains ever new. The Old Testament is never old once it is part of the New, since all has been transformed thanks to the one Spirit who inspired it.

Yet another challenge raised by sacred Scripture has to do with love. God’s word constantly reminds us of the merciful love of the Father who calls his children to live in love. The life of Jesus is the full and perfect expression of this divine love, which holds nothing back but offers itself to all without reserve. To listen to sacred Scripture and then to practise mercy: this is the great challenge before us in life. God’s word has the power to open our eyes and to enable us to renounce a stifling and barren individualism and instead to embark on a new path of sharing and solidarity.

**For the Apostolic Letter in its entirety, visit:**

**[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papafrancescomotu-proprio-20190930\\_aperuit-illis.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papafrancescomotu-proprio-20190930_aperuit-illis.html)**



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