

SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

26 JANUARY 2025

# LITURGICAL AND PASTORAL HANDBOOK

# I HOPE IN YOUR WORD

(Ps 119:74)



DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION  
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS  
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD



IUBILAEUM A. D. MMXXV  
PEREGRINANTES  
IN SPEM

# INTRODUCTION

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Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization

Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World

To live out the *Sixth Sunday of the Word of God*, which will be celebrated throughout the Church this coming 26 January 2025, Pope Francis has chosen as the theme the words of the Psalmist, **"I hope in your Word"** (Ps. 119:74). It is a cry of hope: man, in a moment of anguish, tribulation, and confusion, cries out to God and puts all his hope in him.

It is a deeply human experience, as is usually found in the Psalter. Everyone hopes, we all have hopes, but what is communicated to us in this Jubilee is a "Hope," in the singular. It is not an abstract idea or naive optimism, but a person, alive and present in everyone's life: Christ crucified and risen, the only one who never abandons us. Pauline theology is extremely clear on this point: "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1).

This is a certainty that is placed on our path. In it we must grow without ever looking away from God's faithfulness: "Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy." (Heb. 10:23) The fact that God is faithful to his promises returns like a refrain from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and because of this we can be filled with joy and confidence. Being a certainty of the fulfillment of the promise, Christian hope "does not disappoint" because it is given to us by the efficacious presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5). This is why we can hope in his Word. The apostle Peter understood this well when he stated, "at your command I will lower the nets." (Lk. 5:5), which really means, "I trust in you." The hope that flows from this Word arises from the assurance of faith and entrusts us to God's love, who never contradicts himself or the promise made.

A jubilee that knocks on the door every 25 years and prompts us to take life seriously, offers the opportunity to keep our eyes fixed on the hope that evangelical realism brings. The *Sunday of the Word of God* once again allows Christians to reinvigorate Jesus' tenacious invitation to listen to and cherish his Word in order to offer the world a witness of hope that allows one to move beyond the difficulties of the present moment. The Word of God is not confined to a book, but remains ever alive and becomes a concrete and tangible sign. In fact, it challenges every community not only to proclaim the same faith as always, but above all to communicate it with the conviction that it brings hope to those who listen to it and welcome it with a simple heart.

Each local reality will be able to find the most suitable and effective ways to live this *Sunday* to the fullest, helping "[God's] people to grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the sacred Scriptures" (*Aperuit illis*, 15). This Pastoral Handbook is intended as an aid to be offered to parish communities and those gathered for the celebration of Sunday's Holy Eucharist, so that this *Sunday* may be lived intensely, as an integral part of the Jubilee of 2025, whose motto is *Pilgrims of Hope*.

# THE WORD OF GOD: A SOURCE OF HOPE

**Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori OCist**

Abbot General of the Cistercian Order

Perhaps the man who best understood the relationship between God's word and hope was a pagan, the Roman centurion who, after pleading with Jesus to heal his sick servant, in the face of the Lord's immediate willingness declared himself unworthy for him to go to his house and said to him, "only say the word and my servant will be healed" (Mt. 8:8). One word from Christ was enough for him to have a sure hope in the salvation He had wrought.

Faith enabled the centurion to understand that what arouses hope in God's word is that it is, indeed, a word of God, that is, the word that He who makes all things personally addresses our need for salvation and eternal life. Peter also understood this at a time that could have been one of despair because everyone had abandoned the Lord and only a few awkward and insecure disciples remained with Him,

can surrender to the One who speaks it with total confidence?

This is possible if the word of the Lord reaches the heart not as a promise of something but as a promise of someone, and of someone who loves our lives with an all-powerful love, who can do everything for those who love and trust in Him.

Many abandoned Jesus after the bread of life message in the synagogue at Capernaum, saying, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" (Jn. 6:60). How come Jesus' word was a reason for them to leave when for Peter and the other disciples it was the only reason to stay with Him?

The fact is that the former had heard his word by separating it from its source, Christ himself.

## the word of the Lord reaches the heart not as a promise of something but as a promise of someone

"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). The words of Jesus remained for Peter and his companions as the last thread of hope in a fullness of life they could only hope for from God.

But why and how could Peter's hope, like that of the centurion, cling to the word of Christ? What gives the word of the Lord this power, this solidity whereby we can surrender to it with the full weight of our lives in danger of sliding into despair, death, nothingness? What enables those who hear this word to recognize that we

Peter and the disciples, on the other hand, could not abstract any word of Jesus from his presence, that is, from their relationship with him, from his friendship.

God's word can be a source of hope if for us God remains the source of the word itself. Only if we hear the word from the voice of the present Word, who looks upon us with love, can it nourish in us an unshakable hope, because it is founded on a presence that never fails. God's word is a promise in which not only the one who promises is faithful, but remains

included in the promise itself, because Christ promises us himself. "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20). Jesus' last word, the last promise before he ascends into heaven, is the promise of himself to our lives, not only at the end of time but every day, every moment of our lives.

This indelible link of God's word with his presence, so radical from the time "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn. 1:14) until he died on the cross for us, is the sense and promise of the entire Old Testament. As when Psalm 27 cries out to the Lord, "if you are silent to me, I shall be like those who go down to the Pit" (Ps. 27:1). Man has within him the deep, ontological awareness that if God does not speak to him, if God does not create him at every moment with his word, death, the dissolution of life, is inevitable for him, because God creates by saying everything in the Word through whom all things exist (cf. Jn. 1:3).

One can live without listening to the Word who creates him with love, but in this way he or she experiences, as so many do today, an inconsistent life, a dissipated life, escaping from our hands, unable to hold it. Instead, we are given the grace to live by listening, to live ready to listen to the Lord who is constantly at the door of our freedom, knocking and asking to enter. We are granted to live in an infinite friendship by listening to his voice, which calls us to communion with him (cf. Rev. 3:20), thus allowing the Spirit to generate in us and among us a new life, overflowing with hope, not in something, but in God who fulfills the promise of his presence at the very instant his word expresses it.

