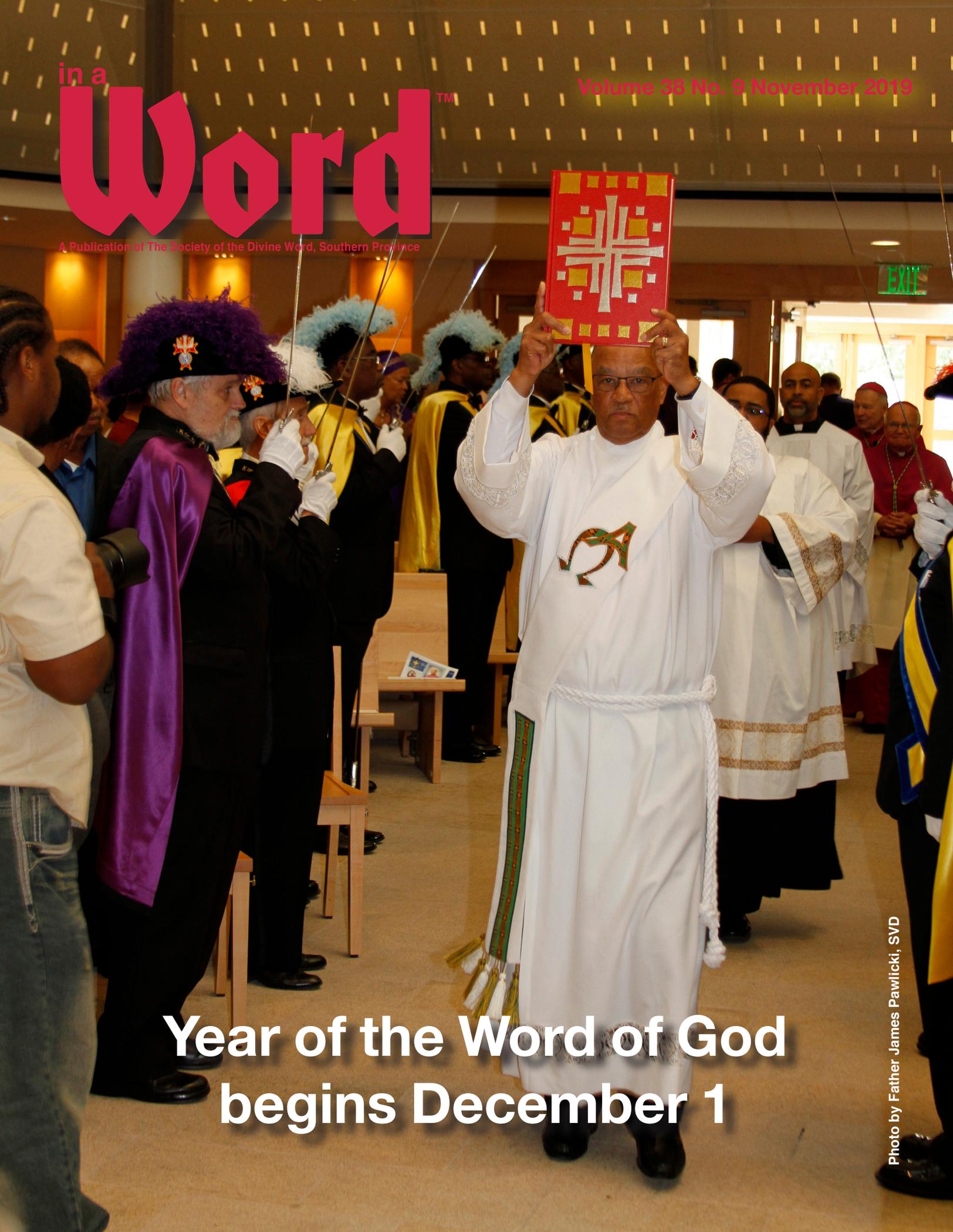


in a  
**Word**™

Volume 38 No. 9 November 2019

A Publication of The Society of the Divine Word, Southern Province



**Year of the Word of God  
begins December 1**

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

# Year of the Word of God

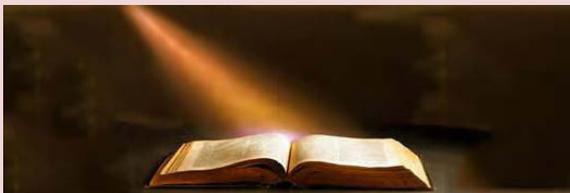
“Throughout the world today, many people hunger and thirst for the life, the healing, and the peace that only Christ can bring. We know that out of the abundance of His love, Christ speaks to people as friends (see John 15:14-15) and lives among us so that He may invite and bring everyone into fellowship with Himself (Dei Verbum 2). In this perspective, the Church, since its earliest days has sought to proclaim Christ and make him known (see 1Cor 2:2). This mission is the very heart or *raison d’etre* of the Church (see Matt 28:19-20; Mark 6:7-12). We cannot deny however, that many people remain deprived of that ‘easy access’ to the Lord in Sacred Scripture and preaching which the Council sought (see Dei Verbum 22 and Verbum Domini 115).”

**With these words, in his letter of January 25, 2019, Cardinal Luis A. Tagle, President of Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) announced to all its members the intention to mark 2020 as a “Year of the Word of God” beginning from the First Sunday of Advent (December 1, 2019) and lasting until the feast of St. Jerome (on September 30, 2020).**

The year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Catholic Biblical Federation. The year 2020 marks the 1600th anniversary of the death of Saint Jerome, the great translator of the Bible, who sought to render the Scriptures into the “common” everyday language of ordinary people, so to make the written Word of God available for all. His zeal to make the Scriptures accessible to people arises from his conviction that “*ignorantia Scripturarum ignorantia Christi est*” (ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ).

The happy coincidence of these two anniversaries inspired the Executive Committee of the CBF to encourage the CBF members to mark 2020 as a “Year of the Word of God” from the First Sunday of Advent (December 1, 2019) until the feast of Saint Jerome (September 30, 2020).

Like the experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, may this year set many hearts on fire as Jesus encounters them on the roads of life with His Word and Table sharing! May they make room for Him and go forth with joy in sharing their experience of the Risen Lord!



# Pope Francis says Word of God must be the beating heart of the Church

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service  
VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Reading the Bible and praying with it is “the best vaccine” against Catholic communities closing in on themselves or focusing only on self-preservation, Pope Francis said.

God wants “a church that does not speak from itself or about itself but has in its heart and on its lips the Lord and draws daily from his word,” the pope told members of the Catholic Biblical Federation. Greeting 200 federation members from 68 countries April 26, Pope Francis said that when Christians basically proclaim themselves instead of Jesus, they transmit nothing to the world. “It is the word of God, not our own,” he said, and “it removes us from being at the center, saves us from self-sufficiency and triumphalism and calls us continually to go out.”

The Catholic Biblical Federation, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, was founded to make the Bible more accessible to Catholics and to highlight “the central role of the Word in faith and mission,” Philippine Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, president of the federation, told Pope Francis.

**Word of God must be ‘beating heart’ of church, pope says.**

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, reaffirmed by then-Pope Benedict XVI in his 2010 exhortation “*Verbum Domini*” (“Word of the Lord”), Cardinal Tagle said, asks individual Catholics and the whole church if the word of God really inspires and guides their view of the world, pastoral priorities and use of resources. “If the word of God does not inspire all of these ecclesial actions, then where does the inspiration come from?” the cardinal asked. “It’s not a rhetorical question.”

Agreeing, Pope Francis said, “it would be beautiful if the word of God increasingly became the heart of every church activity, the beating heart that gives life to the members of the body.”

The Bible gives the church a constant and necessary “injection of life,” he said, which is why homilies based on the Scripture readings at Mass are so important.

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

By Mary Elizabeth Sperry, Associate Director for Utilization of the New American Bible.

*The Bible is all around us. People hear Scripture readings in church. We have Good Samaritan (Luke 10) laws, welcome home the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), and look for the Promised Land (Exodus 3, Hebrews 11). Some biblical passages have become popular maxims, such as “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12),” “Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15), and “love thy neighbor” (Matthew 22:39). Today’s Catholic is called to take an intelligent, spiritual approach to the bible.*

Listed here are 10 points for fruitful Scripture reading.

- 1. Bible reading is for Catholics.** The Church encourages Catholics to make reading the Bible part of their daily prayer lives. Reading these inspired words, people grow deeper in their relationship with God and come to understand their place in the community God has called them to in himself.
- 2. Prayer is the beginning and the end.** Reading the Bible is not like reading a novel or a history book. It should begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to the Word of God. Scripture reading should end with a prayer that this Word will bear fruit in our lives, helping us to become holier and more faithful people.
- 3. Get the whole story!** When selecting a Bible, look for a Catholic edition. A Catholic edition will include the Church’s complete list of sacred books along with introductions and notes for understanding the text. A Catholic edition will have an imprimatur notice on the back of the title page. An imprimatur indicates that the book is free of errors in Catholic doctrine.
- 4. The Bible isn’t a book. It’s a library.** The Bible is a collection of 73 books written over the course of many centuries. The books include royal history, prophecy, poetry, challenging letters to struggling new faith communities, and believers’ accounts of the preaching and passion of Jesus. Knowing the genre of the book you are reading will help you understand the literary tools the author is using and the meaning the author is trying to convey.
- 5. Know what the Bible is – and what it isn’t.** The Bible is the story of God’s relationship with the people he has called to himself. It is not intended to be read as history text, a science book, or a political manifesto. In the Bible, God teaches us the truths that we need for the sake of our salvation.
- 6. The sum is greater than the parts.** Read the Bible in context. What happens before and after – even in other books – helps us to understand the true meaning of the text.
- 7. The Old relates to the New.** The Old Testament and the New Testament shed light on each other. While we read the Old Testament in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, it has its own value as well. Together, these testaments help us to understand God’s plan for human beings.
- 8. You do not read alone.** By reading and reflecting on Sacred Scripture, Catholics join those faithful men and women who have taken God’s Word to heart and put it into practice in their lives. We read the Bible within the tradition of the Church to benefit from the holiness and wisdom of all the faithful.
- 9. What is God saying to me?** The Bible is not addressed only to long-dead people in a faraway land. It is addressed to each of us in our own unique situations. When we read, we need to understand what the text says and how the faithful have understood its meaning in the past. In light of this understanding, we then ask: What is God saying to me?
- 10. Reading isn’t enough.** If Scripture remains just words on a page, our work is not done. We need to meditate on the message and put it into action in our lives. Only then can the word be “living and effective.”(Hebrews 4:12).

This information can be found at the  
U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops  
website at [uscbb.org](http://uscbb.org)

# in a word or two



Women from Ecclesia Dance Ministry perform a liturgical dance during Mass Nov. 17, 2019, at St. Therese of Lisieux Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., in celebration of November as National Black Catholic History Month. The observance was initiated in 1990 by the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus of the United States. November was chosen because it holds two commemorative dates for prominent African Catholics: St. Augustine of Hippo, whose birthday is Nov. 13; and St. Martin de Porres, whose feast day is Nov. 3. (CNS photos/Andrew Pugliese, The Tablet)



Photo by Fr. Pawlicki, SVD



Photo by Fr. Pawlicki, SVD



Women pray during Mass Nov. 17, 2019, at St. Therese of Lisieux Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., in celebration of November as National Black Catholic History Month.



Members of the Voice of Praise Ensemble sing during Mass Nov. 17, 2019, at St. Therese of Lisieux Church in Brooklyn, N.Y.,

## What is your parish planning for the celebration of the Year of the Word of God?

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arkansas.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; consultant.

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Electronic messages to our [inawordsvd@gmail.com](mailto:inawordsvd@gmail.com). IN A WORD is not published during July and August.

Web page can be found at <http://www.inaword.com>