**Lesson 7: The Liturgy of the Word, Part I**

The Introductory Rites lead into the Liturgy of the Word which, together with the Liturgy of the Eucharist, are the two principal actions of the Mass. In the proclamation of both the Old and New Testament, God invites us to deepen our relationship with him. The Word of God recalls the mystery of Christ and our salvation. Through our active participation in hearing the Word of God, we receive the grace to become his messengers to the world through the witness of our lives. The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy on the Second Vatican Council, no. 24 emphasizes the importance of God’s Word in the liturgy, strongly endorsing the promotion of a warm and living love for Scripture. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 28, stresses that it is not subordinate to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but rather that the two liturgies are so closely interconnected that they form one single act of worship.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The Liturgy of the Word follows a three-year cycle for Sunday readings and a two-year cycle for Weekday readings, which gives balance to the readings chosen. In the Liturgy of the Word, God reveals himself to us through the proclamation of his Holy Scriptures. We respond to his revelation and his challenge to follow his ways with attentive listening, song, prayer and silence. If is for this reason that the Liturgy of the Word is considered a dialogue: God speaks and we respond. How are we to receive the Word of God at Mass? We must listen with reverence. While those with hearing impairments are invited to follow along in a missal, those of us who can hear are asked to listen intently. Pope St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter “On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy” emphasized the value of preparing for the Sunday liturgy ahead of time, reflecting beforehand on the Word of God that will be proclaimed so that we “may be more powerfully penetrated by it” (Dies Domini, no. 40). This preparation as well as our preparation before Mass, our attentive listening and our reflection in periods of silence during Mass, is intended to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to each of us.[[2]](#endnote-2)

It is often the case that we have heard the stories of Jesus and the parables he told many times before and that they are very familiar to us. Yet, these stories are not ordinary and do not cease to have impact upon us. They were the words and deeds of Jesus himself and the entire scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the proclamation of these readings has the power to bring about in us what we hear proclaimed. The Church has the conviction that “When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people ,and Christ, present in his own Word, is proclaiming the Gospel.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Sr. Janet Baxendale, SC, *A Walk through the Mass,* p. 7, taken from “Become One Body, One Spirit in Christ” CD resource (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 29, (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, 2003), from Baxendale, SC, *A Walk through the Mass*, p. 8.. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)