

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

PARISH OF CHRIST THE KING,
LOCKLEYS

1. History

- *Paul* writes of the various ministries in the Jesus gatherings (mid-first century CE). For example, in *Romans 12:5-8*: "...we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith;⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching,⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.
- *Lk-Acts* (c85CE): Essential ministries of the early Christians: witness (*marturia*), proclamation (*kerygma*), teaching (*didaskalo*), worship (*leitourgia*). Luke's expression of Lord's Supper: a Liturgy of the Word & Eucharist (Lk 24—Emmaus Story)
- *Caesarius of Arles* (469-541): "The word of God is in no way less than the Body of Christ; nor should it be received less worthily. I ask you, brothers or sisters, tell me: which to you seems the greater, the word of God, or the Body of Christ? If you wish to say what is true you will have to answer that the word of God is not less than the Body of Christ. Therefore just as when the Body of Christ is administered to us, what care do we not use so that nothing of it falls from our hands to the ground, so should we with equal care see that the word of God which is being imparted to us shall not be lost to our soul, while we speak or think of something else. For he who listens carelessly to the word of God is not less guilty than he who through his own inattention suffers the Body of Christ to fall to the ground" (*Sermo*, 300).
- *Second Vatican Council*, "Dei Verbum" (1962): "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God Himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles. Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture." (#21)

2. Theology of the Word

- 'Word' = *logos* (Greek); *Dabar* (Hebrew)
- *Dabar* = word-event
- *Dabar* linked to *ruach* ('breath,' 'wind' or 'spirit')
- First Testament examples of Word as *event* or *happening*.
- God's creative act in **Gen 1**, with the "word"
- **Wisdom 7:24-25** 24 For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. 25 For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains

- entrance into her.
Psalm 33, 119
- Jesus' ministry of the Word through his teaching & healing
 - Jn 1:14 "...and the Word became flesh..."
3. Liturgy of the Word as 'proclamation-event' not simply a 'reading.'
 - Ministry of "Proclamation" not just a "reader".
 - Lectern as 'Table of the Word'
 - Place of the Liturgy of the Word—encounter with the presence of God in Jesus
 - Link to the Liturgy of the Eucharist
 4. 'Ministry'
 - *diakonia* → 'speak on behalf of another' as an appointed ambassador
 - For the community, not personal
 - To which one is called, not chooses: show the 'charism' for ministry
 - Discernment, prayer and deepening wisdom
 - Ministers of Word and Extraordinary Ministers of Eucharist will be commissioned each year in parish celebration of the Sunday Eucharist.
 5. Personal preparation
 - Have access to a contemporary translation of the Bible. Prayerfully read your passage and spiritually prepare yourself in the proclamation in the week leading up to the celebration. References in the *Grapevine*.
 - Prayer and study are key. See www.lockleysparish.com/resources
 - Ministry procession to and from the sanctuary. Altar as focus and symbol of Christ.
 6. Some further practical thoughts:
 - Arrive at least 15 minutes before the celebration having already prayed over the proclamation
 - Microphone use, reading with sentence awareness and pausing.
 - Pausing after introducing the proclamation. Conclude the reading. Pause significantly. Look at the congregation to elicit its response: "The Word of the Lord!" "Thanks be to God"
 - The Responsorial Psalm as prayer....another voice
 - Role of the commentator: Hospitality leader and parish communicator
 - Praying the *Prayer of the Faithful*...another voice
 - Spend time studying the "Lector's Handbook"

Breath-Word as Event

Genesis 2:7 ⁷ then the LORD God formed the earthling from the dust of the ground,¹ and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 ^{NRS} The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath¹ to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath¹ in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." ⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:¹ Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath,² and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. ¹¹ Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.'¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

Wisdom 7:24-25 ²⁴ For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. ²⁵ For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

James 2:12-16 ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters,¹ if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?