



© Oonagh O'Brien: Chapel, Mount St Anne Retreat Centre, Co. Laois

The Word and the Eucharist: two tables, different in nature, inextricably linked, equal in value. If the two tables are equal in value, so also are the two ministries. In a General Audience in 2018 Pope Francis explained what takes place in the Liturgy of the Word: "The pages of the Bible cease to be writings and become living words, spoken by God. It is God, who through the reader, speaks to us and questions us, we who listen with faith." In truth, every Sunday is a Sunday of the Word of God, and it is the privilege of the Minister of the Word to help make that possible.



© The official logo for the Sunday of the Word of God was unveiled at the Vatican January 17 2020 by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. The colourful logo depicts "The Road to Emmaus" and is based on an icon written by the late Benedictine Sister Marie-Paul Farran.

*Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp for my steps and a light for my path.*

Psalm 119:105



III

## Ministers of the Word: An Important Ministry

Cork Scripture Group  
[www.corkscripturegroup.com](http://www.corkscripturegroup.com)

Sometimes it seems as if the Ministry of the Word is the poor relation, in mere second place to the Ministry of the Eucharist. Have we forgotten that “*when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel*”? In 2021 Pope Francis amended the Code of Canon Law to allow women to be admitted to the ministries of acolyte (Minister of the Eucharist) and lector (Minister of the Word), which until then had been exclusively available to men. Pope Francis was merely giving formal approval to an existing practice, but it should be noted that in the rule *both* ministries are named equally, without distinction.



Sister Marie-Paul Farran (1930-2019), *The Road to Emmaus*

The icon from which the logo for the Sunday of the Word of God is derived reflects the equal importance of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. On the left the resurrected Christ is depicted holding in his left hand a scroll of the Scriptures and by his side are the two disciples: possibly Clopas and his wife, Mary.

As they walk together with Jesus, “*beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures*” (Luke 24:27). On the right Jesus is at table with the two disciples: “*he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him*” (Luke 24:30-31). It is noteworthy that when the disciples realise who Jesus is they immediately hark back to the experience on the road: “*Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?*” (Luke 24:32). For them, they are the two sides of the one coin: there is an essential link between the two chief experiences of this transformative encounter. For us, the two events, the breaking of the Word and the breaking of the Bread, are mirrored in the two chief movements at Mass. As Vatican II declared, “the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship.”

The Church has long recognised that at every Mass we are fed from two tables, not just one: “*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*” (Dei Verbum, Vatican II). The General Introduction to the Lectionary stresses the gift each table brings: “*from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness.*”

In every church there is a visual reminder of the importance and unity of the two tables: the ambo and the altar. The ambo or reading desk from which the Word is proclaimed “*should reflect the dignity of God’s word and be a clear reminder to the people that in the Mass the table of God’s word and of Christ’s body is placed before them*” (Consecrated for Worship). It is advised that where possible the relationship between the altar and ambo be shown by both being made from the same materials, and sharing some aspects of design.