

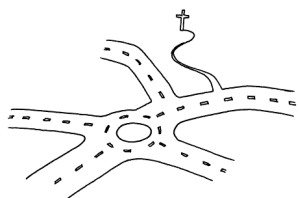
PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B

THE SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

This **'Sunday of the Word of God'** has been observed since 2020 in the Roman Catholic Church. On 30 Sept 2019, Pope Francis's [apostolic letter](#) 'Instituting the Sunday of the Word of God' (entitled *Apparuit illis*) confirmed that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time each year was to be '*devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God*'. The letter opens with the words '*Aperuit illis*' from Luke 24: 45: 'He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures'. For us, too, this Sunday '*helps us experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world*'.

Psalm 24 (25)



This psalm is taken from the first book of psalms (psalms 1–41) and is attributed to David. Books 1, 4 and 5 tend to use 'Lord' (Yahweh) as the name of God, whereas books 2 and 3 use 'God' (Elohim).

Psalm 24 is seen as the prayer of one in who is in danger, but it is also a confident prayer for forgiveness and guidance. This is an acrostic psalm, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The first letter, '*aleph*', comes from a Hebrew root meaning 'to learn'. Such psalms usually contain a series of statements that are loosely connected. Today we look at five of the 21 verses of the complete psalm. These chosen verses focus on the psalmist's need for guidance and direction from a merciful God.

The author of the psalm is asking for help. He humbly acknowledges his need of God to keep him on the right path: '*Lord, make me know your ways.*'

He repeats his plea for instruction: '*teach me*'; and also his desire that the Lord will '*remember*' him. The final verse, referring to the humble and the poor, shows his confidence and faith in the Lord who cares for all people.

Gospel Mark 1: 14–20:

The beginning of Jesus's ministry

Mark's Gospel is the shortest and the first to be written. There are two key elements in his account: the identity of Jesus, and the type of person he calls to follow him. Mark addresses the first element right at the outset (1: 1) and the second in the passage for today (1: 16–20).

Here Mark also tells us here that John has been arrested. He will provide us with full details later (6: 14–29).

The time has come

Jesus began to preach by declaring a time of fulfilment (v. 15): a time in human history for God's Messianic promises, as proclaimed through the prophets, to come to fruition.

'Repent and believe the Good News'

When Jesus preached repentance to the Jews, he was literally calling them to a 'change of mind'. He wanted them to turn away from a religion preoccupied with rules and formality to a more sincere form of worship. For the Gentiles, repentance involved turning from the worship of pagan idols to the worship of the one true God.

'Follow me'

Here Mark shows Jesus laying the foundations of his kingdom; calling his first followers. Jesus called ordinary people doing ordinary things and he called them personally.

There were many fishermen in Galilee. Josephus, the great historian of the Jews, and once a governor of Galilee, tells us that 330 fishing boats sailed the waters of the lake. Fish was the staple diet of the people. The names of the towns of the lakeside reflect the importance of the fishing trade: Bethsaida means 'House of Fish'.

They left their nets and followed him.

When the Bar-Jona brothers, Simon and Andrew, and the Zebedee brothers, James and John, left everything to go with Jesus, their response typified the 'change of mind' Jesus was preaching. Their *response* is what identifies them as disciples. Mark does not mention any other attributes or characteristics of these men.

Fishermen used two kinds of nets at that time, and the one that Peter and Andrew were using was a small net called an *amphiblestron*. It was skilfully cast into the water by hand and was shaped rather like an umbrella.