

- The 'Alleluia' is a Hebrew exaltation meaning 'Praise the Lord!' and recurs frequently in the Psalms of Praise [Psalms 111-117].
- The ritual of the priest washing his hands before the Eucharistic Prayer reflects the purification rites of the priests before coming to the altar in Exodus 30:17-20.
- The 'Holy, Holy, Holy' is drawn from Isaiah 6:3, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts" and the heavenly vision in Rev 4:8.
- The words of consecration are drawn, as we have seen, from the accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and 1 Cor 11:24-25.
- The 'Our Father' is drawn from Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4.
- The Prayer for Peace is taken from Jesus farewell discourse to his disciples in John 14:27.
- The invitation to behold "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" is a verbatim quote from John the Baptist pointing Jesus out to his disciples in John 1:29.
- The response 'Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed' is inspired by the faith-filled words of the Roman centurion imploring Jesus to heal his servant in Luke 7:6-7.

When we gather to pray the Mass together, from the first moment until the final blessing, even though we may not be conscious of it, our prayer is steeped in, inspired by and flows from the sacred Word of God.



© 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



V

Source and Inspiration of our Prayer at Mass

Cork Scripture Group
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Vatican II proclaimed the centrality of the Word of God in all aspects of Christian life and worship. It stated that “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 21*]. The Word of God is the heart and soul of all aspects of our faith and is very often the source and inspiration of our prayer and our worship.

The Sacred Scriptures are obviously the central focus of our prayer and our reflection in the Liturgy of the Word. This part of the Mass is rooted in the synagogue Sabbath service in which Jesus himself would have participated. Such a service would have included readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, including the psalms, along with communal prayers, hymns and reflections. The readings from the sacred texts would usually have been followed by a brief explanation and exhortation which, in the Christian tradition, has developed into the homily. When the early Christians were expelled from the synagogue they adapted this service to include letters from the early apostles and stories about the life and teaching of Jesus which gradually developed into the gospels as we know them today.

The influence of the Sacred Scriptures however extends far beyond the Liturgy of the Word and shapes and colours the entire prayer of the Mass. The Liturgy of the Eucharist itself is celebrated in obedience to Jesus' command to his disciples at the Last Supper - 'Do this in memory of me' - recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke as well as in St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. The words of consecration are taken directly from the gospel accounts of the institution of the Eucharist in the Bible, underlining once more the integral link between Word and Eucharist.

What is less apparent is that many other parts of our prayer at Mass are also drawn directly from or, at the very least, take their inspiration from Biblical passages.



Please use the accompanying 'quiz sheet' and see how many parts of the Mass you can match with their biblical roots before reading the rest of these notes. Good luck!

- The 'sign of the cross' comes directly from Matthew 28:19, where Jesus commands his apostles to go out to all nations and to baptize them “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”
- The language of the priest's greeting, “The Lord be with you,” and the congregation's response, “And with your spirit” comes from 2 Timothy 4:22: “The Lord be with your spirit.”
- The penitential invocation, ‘Lord have mercy,’ echoes the cry of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-47, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”
- The gesture of beating our breast as we pray the Confiteor is drawn from the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector in Luke 18:13.
- The opening lines of the Gloria are taken from the song of the angels in Luke 2:14.
- The Liturgy of the Word reflects the example of Moses in Exodus 24:7 when he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people.
- The gesture of standing for the proclamation of the Gospel recalls the renewal of the covenant when the people returned from exile in Nehemiah 8:5, “and when he opened the book the people stood up.”