

CLIFF NOTES FOR THE  
POST-SYNODAL  
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION  
*VERBUM DOMINI*  
OF THE HOLY FATHER  
BENEDICT XVI

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## INTRODUCTION

**Objective:** "In this way I wish to point out certain fundamental approaches to a rediscovery of God's word in the life of the Church as a wellspring of constant renewal. At the same time, I express my hope, that the word will be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity" (#1).

**Encounter with Christ:** "From this kerygmatic standpoint, the synodal assembly was a testimony, before the Church and before the world, to the immense beauty of encountering the word of God in the communion of the Church. For this reason I encourage all the faithful to renew their personal and communal encounter with Christ, the word of life made visible, and to become his heralds, so that the gift of divine life – communion – can spread ever more fully throughout the world [...] There is no greater priority than this: to enable the people of our time once more to encounter God, the God who speaks to us and shares his love so that we might have life in abundance (cf. *Jn* 10:10)" (#2).

**Continuity with *Dei Verbum* of the Vatican II:** "Everyone is aware of the great impulse which the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* gave to the revival of interest in the word of God in the life of the Church, to theological reflection on divine revelation and to the study of sacred Scripture" (#3).

**Synod celebrated in the Year of Saint Paul:** It was providential that the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly took place during the year dedicated to the great Apostle of the Nations on the two thousandth anniversary of his birth [...] Whenever we reflect on the word of God in the life and mission of the Church, we cannot but think of Saint Paul and his life spent in spreading the message of salvation in Christ to all peoples" (#4.)

**The Prologue of John's Gospel as a guide:** "I would like to present and develop the labors of the Synod by making constant reference to the *Prologue of John's Gospel* (*Jn* 1:1-

18), which makes known to us the basis of our life: the Word, who from the beginning is with God, who became flesh and who made his dwelling among us (cf. *Jn* 1:14). This is a magnificent text, one which offers a synthesis of the entire Christian faith" (#5).

## PART ONE VERBUM DEI

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh (Jn 1:1, 14)*

**God speaks to his People:** "The novelty of biblical revelation consists in the fact that God becomes known through the dialogue which he desires to have with us [...] Consequently the Word, who from the beginning is with God and is God, reveals God himself in the dialogue of love between the divine persons, and invites us to share in that love. Created in the image and likeness of the God who is love, we can thus understand ourselves only in accepting the Word and in docility to the work of the Holy Spirit." (#6).

**Analogy of the Word:** Christianity is the "religion of the word of God", not of "a written and mute word, but of the incarnate and living Word." Consequently the Scripture is to be proclaimed, heard, read, received and experienced as the word of God, in the stream of the apostolic Tradition from which it is inseparable. As the Synod Fathers stated, the expression "word of God" is used analogically, and we should be aware of this. The faithful need to be better helped to grasp the different meanings of the expression, but also to understand its unitary sense (#7).

**The cosmic dimension of the Word:** "When we consider the basic meaning of the word of God as a reference to the eternal Word of God made flesh, the one Savior and mediator between God and humanity, and we listen to this word, we are led by the biblical revelation to see that it is the foundation of all reality" (#8).

**Tradition:** "The living Tradition is essential for enabling the Church to grow through time in the understanding of the truth revealed in the Scriptures" (#17).

**Inspiration and truth:** "Sacred Scripture is the word of God set down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In this way, one recognizes the full importance of the human author, who wrote the inspired texts and, at the same time, God himself as the true author" (#19).

**God hears us:** "Thus it is decisive, from the pastoral standpoint, to present the word of

God in its capacity to enter into dialogue with the everyday problems which people face. [...] The Church's pastoral activity needs to bring out clearly, how God listens to our need and our plea for help" (#23).

**Exegesis:** "In their work of interpretation, Catholic exegetes must never forget that what they are interpreting is the word of God. Their common task is not finished when they have simply determined sources, defined forms or explained literary procedures. They arrive at the true goal of their work only when they have explained the meaning of the biblical text as God's word for today" (#33).

**Jews and Scripture:** "I wish to state once more how much the Church values her dialogue with the Jews. Wherever it seems appropriate, it would be good to create opportunities for encounter and exchange in public as well as in private, and thus to promote growth in reciprocal knowledge, in mutual esteem and cooperation, also in the study of the sacred Scriptures" (#43).

**Ecumenism:** "Conscious that the Church has her foundation in Christ, the incarnate Word of God, the Synod wished to emphasize the centrality of biblical studies within ecumenical dialogue aimed at the full expression of the unity of all believers in Christ" (#46).

**Bible translations and ecumenism:** "Promoting common translations of the Bible is part of the ecumenical enterprise. I would like to thank all those engaged in this important work, and I encourage them to persevere in their efforts" (#46).

## PART TWO

### VERBUM IN ECCLESIA

*But to all who received him he gave power to become children of God (Jn 1:12)*

**Sacred liturgy:** "I encourage the Church's pastors and all engaged in pastoral work to see that all the faithful learn to savor the deep meaning of the word of God which unfolds each year in the liturgy, revealing the fundamental mysteries of our faith" (#52).

**The homily:** "The homily is part of the liturgical action and is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful. [...] For this reason, preachers need to be in close and constant contact with the sacred text; they should prepare for the homily by meditation and prayer, so as to preach with conviction and passion" (#59).

**Celebrations of the Word of God:** "The synod fathers encouraged all pastors to

promote times devoted to the celebration of the word in the communities entrusted to their care. These celebrations are privileged occasions for an encounter with the Lord. This practice will certainly benefit the faithful, and should be considered an important element of liturgical formation" (#65).

**Acoustics:** "Concern should be shown for church acoustics, with due respect for liturgical and architectural norms" (#68).

**Liturgical song:** "As part of the enhancement of the word of God in the liturgy, attention should also be paid to the use of song at the times called for by the particular rite. Preference should be given to songs which are of clear biblical inspiration and which express, through the harmony of music and words, the beauty of God's word. We would do well to make the most of those songs handed down to us by the Church's tradition which respect this criterion. I think, in particular, of the importance of Gregorian chant" (#70).

**Biblical apostolate:** "The synod called for a particular pastoral commitment to emphasizing the centrality of the word of God in the Church's life, and recommended a greater 'biblical apostolate,' not alongside other forms of pastoral work, but as a means of letting the Bible inspire all pastoral work" (#73)

**Catechesis:** "Catechetical work always entails approaching Scripture in faith and in the Church's Tradition, so that its words can be perceived as living, just as Christ is alive today wherever two or three are gathered in his name" (#74).

**Lectio Divina:** "The documents produced before and during the Synod mentioned a number of methods for a faith-filled and fruitful approach to sacred Scripture. Yet the greatest attention was paid to Lectio Divina, which is truly capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God's word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God" (#87).

**Closeness to the Holy Land:** "The synod fathers recalled the felicitous phrase which speaks of the Holy Land as 'the Fifth Gospel.' How important it is that in those places there be Christian communities, notwithstanding any number of hardships! The Synod of Bishops expressed profound closeness to all those Christians who dwell in the land of Jesus and bear witness to their faith in the Risen One" (#89).

**PART THREE**  
**VERBUM MUNDO**

*No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,  
who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known ( Jn 1:18)*

**Proclamation and the new evangelization:** "Many of our brothers and sisters are 'baptized, but insufficiently evangelized.' In a number of cases, nations once rich in faith and in vocations are losing their identity under the influence of a secularized culture. The need for a new evangelization so deeply felt by my venerable Predecessor must be valiantly reaffirmed, in the certainty, that God's word is effective" (#96).

**Justice:** "God's word inspires men and women to build relationships based on rectitude and justice, and testifies to the great value in God's eyes of every effort to create a more just and more livable world" (#100).

**Reconciliation and peace:** "In the present context it is more necessary than ever to rediscover the word of God as a source of reconciliation and peace, since in that word God is reconciling to himself all things: Christ 'is our peace,' the one who breaks down the walls of division" (#102).

**Respect of Creation:** "The arrogance of human beings who live 'as if God did not exist' leads them to exploit and disfigure nature, failing to see it as the handiwork of the creative Word" (#108).

**Internet:** "In the world of the internet, which enables billions of images to appear on millions of screens throughout the world, the face of Christ needs to be seen and his voice heard, for " if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man" (#113).

**Interreligious dialogue:** "The Church considers an essential part of the proclamation of the word to consist in encounter, dialogue and cooperation with all people of good will, particularly with the followers of the different religious traditions of humanity. This is to take place without forms of syncretism and relativism, but along the lines indicated by the Second Vatican Council's Declaration 'Nostra Aetate' and subsequently developed by the Magisterium of the Popes" (#117).

**CONCLUSION**

**God's definitive word:** We must never forget that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on *the word of God proclaimed, accepted, celebrated and meditated upon in the Church*. This deepening relationship with the divine word will take place with

even greater enthusiasm if we are conscious that, in Scripture and the Church's living Tradition, we stand before God's definitive word on the cosmos and on history (# 121).

**The word and joy:** The synodal assembly enabled us to experience all that Saint John speaks of: the proclamation of the word creates *communion* and brings about *joy* (#123).

*Mater Verbi et Mater laetitiae:* Mary is blessed because she has faith, because she believed, and in this faith she received the Word of God into her womb in order to give him to the world. The joy born of the Word can now expand to all those who, by faith, let themselves be changed by God's word [...] Let us be silent in order to hear the Lord's word and to meditate upon it, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit it may remain in our hearts and speak to us all the days of our lives. In this way the Church will always be renewed and rejuvenated, thanks to the word of the Lord which remains for ever (cf. *1 Pet* 1:25; *Is* 40:8). Thus we too will enter into the great nuptial dialogue which concludes sacred Scripture: "The Spirit and the bride say: 'Come'. And let everyone who hears say: 'Come!' The one who testifies to these things, says: 'Surely I am coming soon!'. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (*Rev* 22:17, 20), (#124).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 30 September, the Memorial of Saint Jerome, in the year 2010, the sixth of my Pontificate

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