



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Annual *Sunday of the Word of God*, January 21, 2024

Instituted by Pope Francis in his Apostolic letter "*Aperuit Illis*", September 30, 2019

Excerpts from "*Aperuit Illis*":

1. "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (*Lk* 24:45). "This was one of the final acts of the risen Lord before his Ascension. Jesus appeared to the assembled disciples, broke bread with them and opened their minds to the understanding of the sacred Scriptures. To them, amid their fear and bewilderment, he unveiled the meaning of the paschal mystery: that in accordance with the Father's eternal plan he had to suffer and rise from the dead, in order to bring repentance and the forgiveness of sins (cf. *Lk* 24:26.46-47). He then promised to send the Holy Spirit, who would give them strength to be witnesses of this saving mystery (cf. *Lk* 24:49)."
2. "With this Letter, I wish to respond to the many requests I have received from the people of God that the entire Church celebrate, in unity of purpose, a ***Sunday of the Word of God***."
3. "Consequently, I hereby declare that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God. This ***Sunday of the Word of God*** will thus be a fitting part of that time of the year when we are encouraged to strengthen our bonds with the Jewish people and to pray for Christian unity."

Read *Aperuit Illis* bit.ly/3tq9Enz Read Dept of Ed. Guidelines <https://bit.ly/3S7Yddn>

As part of our thankfulness for God's gift of the Bible, the Word of God, Americans can learn and protect our 1st amendment religious freedoms. In our teachings, CFFR speakers too often meet students whose rights to live their faith in public schools are denied. A student wearing clothing with a Bible verse is a frequent target of discipline in public schools. Reading the Bible and religious books during free reading time is another right often denied. On Long Island, for example, a high school senior with a strong dedication to the Bible read his Bible during free reading time. One day a teacher noticed what he was reading and proceeded to mock the student and to encourage other students to mock him for reading the Bible. These school personnel are ignoring the "U.S. Dept. of Education and Dept. of Justice's Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Schools" which protects, among other things, students' religious themed clothing and the reading of religious materials.