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Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

23rd November 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

Letter to the Faithful on the New Lectionary

On the First Sunday of Advent all parishes in Scotland will begin using our new translation of the Lectionary, taken from the English Standard Version Catholic Edition of the Bible (published 2018). This new translation has been chosen by the Bishops of Scotland, and the Bishops of England and Wales, and approved by the Dicastery for Divine Worship in the Vatican for the proclamation of God's Word to His People at Mass.

During the celebration of Mass, the privileged moment in which the Lord Jesus speaks directly to the hearts of all who are gathered is the Liturgy of the Word. When the Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, the Lord God addresses each one of us, offering us a word of encouragement, consolation, and grace. To receive this gift, it is necessary to be attentive, humble, and docile to the Word of God addressed to us. Our Lectionary is the liturgical means that this gift of God's Word is carried over to His people.

Recently my brother Bishop, Hugh Gilbert of the Diocese of Aberdeen, spoke of the Lectionary as 'a bridge by which the biblical Word of God crosses over to believers gathered for worship. It bottles the wine of Scripture, as it were, for it to be served at the Table of the Word. When its words are read it is as if they are poured into the glasses of the faithful, each according to the measure of faith given them, and so imbibed.'

This is a heartening image and speaks to the richness and invigorating effects of Sacred Scripture: lifting our hearts and minds to contemplate God who has revealed Himself to us, whilst recalling that such a grace must be received with humility and gratitude for what it is – a gift of God.

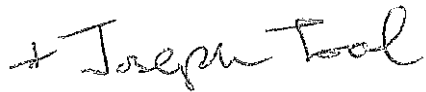
All the readings we will hear throughout the Liturgical Year are the same portions of Scripture we know and are accustomed to, yet this new translation offers the opportunity to read them with fresh eyes, to hear them with attentive ears, and to receive them as a pure and inexhaustible gift from God. As St Ephraim once said, 'within Sacred Scripture God has buried manifold treasures, so that each of us might grow rich in seeking them out.'

God's Word has the power not only to address us directly, but also to penetrate our very depths, casting its light and clarity to the far reaches of our being, and to carry us forward and upward to God. As the Letter to the Hebrews puts it, 'the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart' (4:12).

It is my confident hope and prayer that is new translation of the Sacred Scriptures will be an opportunity for all of us, the People of God, ministered to by our priests and deacons, to ponder anew the inestimable gift the Lord God has bestowed upon us through His Word, and so grow in knowledge, love, and devotion of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is revealed to us on every page of His Holy Word.

With my prayers and best wishes as we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King and look forward to Advent.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

+ Joseph Toal