

PRAYER SERVICE
In Honor of St. Jerome
And his Work to Spread the Word of God

LEADER: One of the beautiful things about our Catholic Church is how our Pope can instruct us by dedicating a specific Sunday Liturgy on the Church calendar to a new topic. Pope Francis announced, in a *moto proprio* statement titled *Aperuit Illis*, that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time will be known as “Sunday of the Word of God.” This comes early in the New Year, and gets to the heart of one of our major tools used to understand the past in the Old Testament, and Jesus, the Messiah, in the New Testament. This tool is the Bible. Let us respond with the words of St. Paul in his Second Letter to Timothy:

ALL: All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

READER 1: St. Jerome devoted his life to translating the Bible into Latin so that this gift might be received by all of us. We are a one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church through the power of the Word of God uniting its believers into one people. St. Jerome made the Bible accessible to the world. St. Jerome lived and worked from 347 to 420 A.D. He was gifted with the ability to read and write Greek, Hebrew, and Latin.

READER 2: In St. Jerome’s time, the Bible was transcribed, or written down, then copied again and again -- by hand with no typewriters, computers, printing press, or copy machines. The printing press wasn't invented until the 1400s. Scribes could only work on copying texts during daylight hours or by candlelight, which added to the burden of creating each copy of The Bible. It was valuable, yet tedious and very difficult work. Dedicated people, mostly monks and nuns, copied God’s Word from sunup to sundown.

ALL: All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

READER 1: At times in his life, St. Jerome lived in a large cave in the hills outside of Bethlehem, close to the hillsides which Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

traveled. The Old Testament was mostly in Hebrew, and the New Testament was in Greek. St. Jerome went to a rabbi to learn Hebrew. Some of his friends came to help him, including a group of women: Marcella, Paula, Blesilla, and Eustochium.

READER 2: St. Jerome's cave was cold in the winter and hot in the summer, yet they all were dedicated to sharing the Word with others in Latin, which was spoken in a large part of the world at that time. Latin made it easier to spread God's Word far and wide. Jerome analyzed translations to make sure they reflected the original meaning, and used a pen made of bone. He would dip it in ink and then write on parchment. Do you think it would be easy to change your mind and try to erase?

ALL: All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

LEADER: Thank you, God, for letting your light shine inside our hearts so we, too, might see the value of reading the Bible. We love you, and we thank St. Jerome for allowing you to guide him to make accurate translations to Latin. From his work, scribes have taken your loving message to all corners of the Earth. Together we pray:

ALL: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Jean Grant is a retired teacher from St. Charles, Missouri.