

The Living Word of God (28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Hebrews 4:12-13—The Living Word of God

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³ And before him no creature is hidden, but *all are open and laid bare* to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

1. Word of God: “word (Greek *logos*) of God” (4:12)
2. Living and Active: “living” (Greek *zōn*) and “active” (Greek *energēs*) (4:12)
3. Two-Edged Sword: “two-edged sword” (Greek *machaira*) (4:12; cf. Prov 5:4)

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me... one like *a son of man*... in his right hand he held seven stars, from *his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword*... (Rev 1:12-13, 16)

3. Cutting: power to *reveal* or “cut” down to the human heart (3:13)

Now when they heard this *they were cut to the heart*, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins... *So those who received his word were baptized*, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:37-38, 41)

4. Revealed: “before him no creature is hidden” (4:13)

The Living Tradition

John Cassian: “As our mind is increasingly renewed by this study, *the face of Scripture will also begin to be renewed, and the beauty of a more sacred understanding will somehow grow with the person making progress.* For its form is also adapted to the capacity of human intelligence, and it will appear as earthly to carnal persons and as divine spiritual persons....” (John Cassian, *Conferences* 14.11.1; trans. Boniface Ramsey)

Gregory the Great: *The more a saint progresses in Scripture, the more the same Scripture progresses in him*... Divine eloquence grows with the reader, for one understands it the more deeply as one’s intention searches more deeply within it... (Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1.7.8; trans. Duncan Robertson)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. In the book of Hebrews, what is the “Word of God”? How is it “living” and “active”? Why does Hebrews compare it to a “two-edged sword”?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews*. Trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P. Lander, Wyo.: Aquinas Institute, 2012.
2. Mary Healy. *Hebrews*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2016.
3. Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey, eds. *Hebrews*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament X. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2005.