



When we enter a church, our senses are enveloped in a sacred atmosphere: the aroma of incense, the light filtering through stained glass windows, the reverent silence. Among all the elements that shape the liturgical space, there is one that often goes unnoticed but carries profound spiritual significance: the **ambo**.

The ambo is not just a simple lectern where the Scriptures are read; it is a privileged place from which the voice of God resounds in the assembly. It is, in a sense, an echo of Mount Sinai, where God spoke to His people, and of the empty tomb, where the angel announced Christ's Resurrection. In this article, we will explore its history, theological significance, and its impact on our Christian life.

## 1. What Is the Ambo?

The ambo is the elevated place within the sanctuary from which the biblical readings are proclaimed during Mass. It should not be confused with the pulpit, which in older churches was used for preaching. Liturgically, the ambo is reserved exclusively for the proclamation of God's Word and certain liturgical announcements.

The **General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)** states:

*"The dignity of the Word of God requires that in the church there be a place that fosters its proclamation and toward which, during the Liturgy of the Word, the faithful's attention naturally turns"*  
(GIRM, 309).

Its design varies according to tradition and church style, but it must always be a dignified, elevated, and fixed place, never a mere portable lectern.

## 2. A Place of Encounter with God

The Church teaches that the liturgy is an encounter with the mystery of God. In the Liturgy of the Word, Christ Himself is present and speaks to us:

*"When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, it is God*



*himself who speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7).*

This principle is crucial to understanding the importance of the ambo. From it, it is not merely a lector reading a text; it is God Himself addressing His people.

In a certain sense, the ambo is analogous to the altar: just as the altar is the place of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the ambo is the place of the **banquet of the Word**. Both are spiritual tables where God nourishes His children.

### 3. The Ambo in the History of the Church

Since the early centuries of Christianity, churches have had a special place for the proclamation of the Word. In ancient basilicas, there were elevated structures called **ambones**, from which readings and the Gospel were proclaimed.

During the Middle Ages, ambos lost their prominence and were replaced by pulpits, which were more suited for preaching. However, with the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council, the importance of the ambo was restored as the proper place for the proclamation of God's Word.

### 4. Theological Significance of the Ambo

#### a) The Ambo and Mount Sinai

In the book of Exodus, God reveals Himself to Moses and gives him the Law on Mount Sinai. The ambo is an image of this sacred mountain, for from it, God continues to speak to us through His Word.

*"Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, 'This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel'" (Exodus 19:3).*



Every time Scripture is proclaimed from the ambo, it is as if we were standing at the foot of Sinai, listening to God speak to us.

## **b) The Ambo and the Empty Tomb**

During the Easter Vigil, the Church proclaims the Resurrection of the Lord from the ambo, and it is significant that in ancient Roman basilicas, ambos were often decorated with reliefs depicting the empty tomb.

*“He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay” (Matthew 28:6).*

The ambo is, in a way, the place where the Gospel of the Resurrection continues to resound.

## **c) The Ambo and the Incarnation**

When the Word is proclaimed, the Eternal Word becomes flesh in the midst of the Christian community. St. Jerome said:

*“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”*

From the ambo, the Church proclaims Christ, the eternal Word of God, made man for our salvation.

# **5. Practical Applications in Our Lives**

## **a) Listening with Attention and Reverence**

When we attend Mass, we must receive the Word with an open heart. It is not just an ancient text but a **living Word that speaks to us today**.

## **b) Preparing Before Mass**

It is recommended to read the daily readings in advance to understand them better and



meditate on them in prayer.

### **c) Applying the Word in Our Lives**

Jesus exhorts us to be not only hearers but doers of the Word:

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22).*

We must ask ourselves: **What is God telling me today through His Word? How can I live it out in my family, at work, in my community?**

## **Conclusion: Rediscovering the Value of the Ambo**

The ambo is not just a lectern; it is a **sacred place where God speaks to us**. It is an echo of Mount Sinai, a reflection of the empty tomb, and a reminder that the Word still dwells among us.

The next time we are at Mass and hear the Word from the ambo, let us remember that God Himself is speaking to us. Let us listen with faith, meditate on His message, and bring it into our daily lives, for only then will the Word bear fruit in us.

May every ambo in our churches be a **beacon of light on our path of faith**, and may every Christian heart be fertile ground where the Word produces abundant fruit.