

Incarnating THE KERYGMA

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Opening Prayer

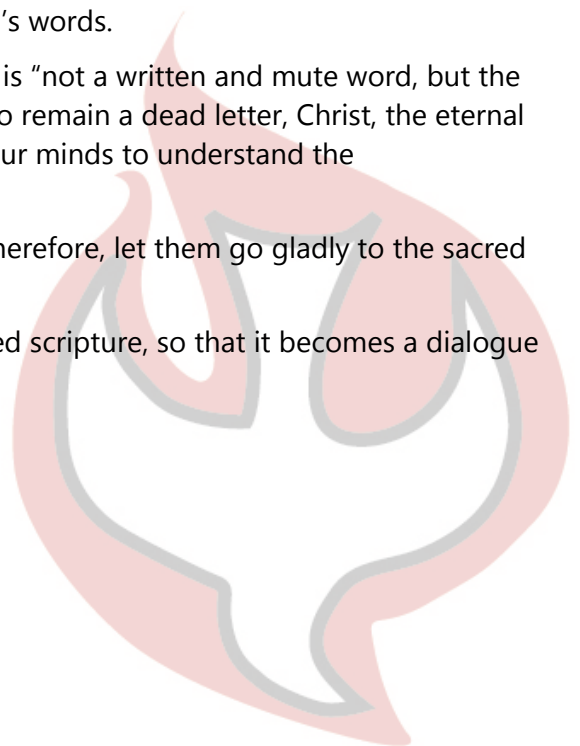
Lord Jesus, you are the Word made flesh and the most perfect way in which God has revealed Himself to us. We ask you to help us understand Your word that we may know you better and become better disciples of You. We ask this in Your most holy Name. Amen.

Scripture Reading *Luke 4:14-21*

In this Gospel, Jesus reads from the Sacred Scripture in the synagogue at Nazareth. He reveals that the prophet Isaiah prefigures His mission on earth and that He has come to fulfill the Hebrew Scriptures.

What is important to read Sacred Scripture?

- The Church has always venerated the divine scriptures as it has venerated the Body of the Lord. Scripture is the "living word of God."
- Access to the sacred scripture ought to be widely available to the Christian faithful.
- Taught by the Holy Spirit [the Church] strives to reach an increasingly more profound understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, in order to nourish its children with God's words.
- Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living." If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, "open our minds to understand the Scriptures" (*CCC, 108*).
- "Ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (St. Jerome). Therefore, let them go gladly to the sacred text itself, whether in the sacred liturgy or in devout reading.
- Remember that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred scripture, so that it becomes a dialogue between God and the human reader (*Dei Verbum 21-25*).



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How do I read the Bible correctly?

- God Himself is the author of Sacred Scripture. For this reason, it is said to be inspired and to teach without error that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures.
- Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and guidance of the Church according to four criteria:
 - It must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture.
 - It must be read within the living Tradition of the Church.
 - It must be read with attention to the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith.
 - It must be read with the understanding that the stories in scripture are multivalent and have multiple levels of meaning.
 - **Literal Sense:** the meaning, interpreted rightly, on which all other senses are based.
 - **Spiritual Sense:** the deeper significance of the text.
 - **Allegorical Sense:** reflecting on the event's significance in Christ.
 - **Moral Sense:** reflecting on the event's role in leading us to justice.
 - **Anagogical Sense:** reflecting on event's eternal significance.
- Scripture is inspired by God and written by human authors. It can be seen as a conversation. God speaks, the authors receive the inspiration and write what they hear. The purpose of Scripture is to give biblical truth, not historic or scientific fact. (Divine Inspiration is sometimes called Verbal Inspiration.)
- **False theories** of inspiration include:
 - **Hypnotic Theory:** God hypnotized or took control of the body of the human authors of Scripture.
 - **Divine Dictation:** God dictated word for word the Scripture to the human authors
 - **Negative Assistance:** God only communicated with the human authors of Scripture when they were going to make a mistake.
 - **Retroactive Inspiration:** God only assisted after the writings were done and did not provide inspiration to the human authors as the Scripture was being written.
- Challenges to Interpretation
 - **Biblical Literalism/ Fundamentalism:** Reading Scripture in the strictest literal sense without appreciation of the various literary forms that the biblical authors used within the specific cultural circumstances in which they were writing.
 - **Historical Reductionism:** Denying the supernatural aspects of the Gospels, such as the Incarnation, Virgin Birth, miracles, and the Resurrection.

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How were the books in the Bible determined?

• Old Testament

- Earliest written part dates to around 1050 BC; last books completed around 150 BC
- Most books were originally written in Hebrew and developed over many years.
- Our Old Testament, also known as the Septuagint, utilizes the books that Jesus and Paul would have been familiar with as their Sacred Scripture.

• New Testament

- Early written part were St. Paul's letters around 50AD; last books completed no later than 125AD.
- Most books were originally written in Greek.
- The 27 books were widely settled upon between 150-200AD, but are listed as divinely inspired in St. Athanasius' Festal Letter of 367AD, the Council of Rome in 382AD, and at the Council of Hippo by Augustine in 393AD. The canon was given final definition by the Church at the Council of Trent in 1546AD in response to Martin Luther.
- These books were determined to be authentically inspired by God to be included in the Bible based on four criteria:
 - **Apostolicity** – The books had a connection to an apostle or one of his followers.
 - **Orthodoxy** – The teachings found in the book accorded with the rule of faith.
 - **Usage** – Widespread usage in the liturgy, preaching, and worship of the community.
 - **Antiquity** - An ancient text that was acknowledged by all the major Christian communities of the time. (This criteria implies that the canon "closed" with the death of the last apostle.)

What is a good Catholic translation of the Bible?

- In the United States, the official translation of the Bible used in liturgy is the **New American Bible** (NAB) revised in 1998. It was written with the mindset to be read aloud. However, it is not necessary to use this translation for personal use.
- There is also a revised edition of the New American Bible (NABRE), which was published by the USCCB in 2011. The new translation takes into account the discovery of new and better ancient manuscripts so that the best possible textual tradition is followed. In many ways it is a more literal translation than the original *New American Bible* and has attempted to be more consistent in rendering Hebrew (or Greek) words and idioms.
- Another good translation is the **New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition** (NRSV-CE), which is used in liturgy in Canada. It is a more literal translation of the Scripture, and provides multiple footnotes which suggest alternate translations of phrases.