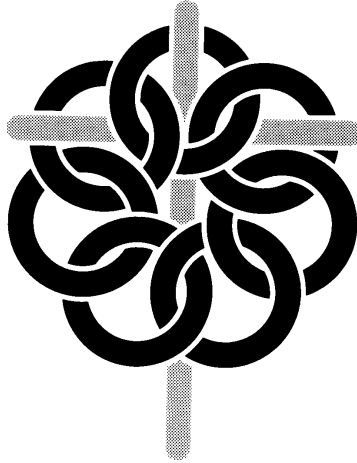


GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF BIBLE AND BIBLE STORYBOOKS



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE
DIOCESE OF JOLIET

CATECHIST CERTIFICATION NOTE: Studying individually or as a group and providing a written report on this document to your principal or director of religious education can be credited toward diocesan certification.

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
 - II. Acknowledgment
 - III. Catechesis and Scripture
 - IV. Scripture and Catholicism
 - V. What Catholics should consider
 - VI. Age-appropriate selections
 - VII. Appendices
-

I. Introduction

Catechesis is that aspect of the Ministry of the Word which assumes a great responsibility for echoing the Gospel Message.

The primary and essential object of catechesis is, to use an expression dear to St. Paul and also to contemporary theology, "the mystery of Christ." Catechizing is a way to lead a person to study this Mystery in all its dimensions.
(Catechesi Tradendae, 5)

Thus, persons charged with the coordination of catechetical programs often are asked to be consultants for the selection of religious oriented texts and resources.

The Religious Education Office of the Diocese of Joliet presents these *Guidelines for the Selection of Bible and Bible Storybooks* as a resource for Directors of Religious Education, Directors of Youth Ministry, Directors of Adult Formation, principals, and others charged with lifelong faith formation. **This resource is to be viewed as a guideline, not a mandate.** It may be shared with parents and other adults who may wish to purchase Bibles or Bible storybooks for children and other adults.

Within this text is a distinction between the Bible and Bible storybooks. References to Bibles pertain to the actual chapter/verse translations of the Holy Scriptures. Bible stories present variations in Scriptural

accounts. Selection of particular texts is pertinent to the age and learning ability of the Scripture learner.

Within the appendices, there is a bibliography of resources which may assist in the selection of texts. There is also a list of Bibles and Bible stories which are worth consideration. Please note that the list is not exhaustive and serves only as a point of reference.

II. Acknowledgment

Consultants on the development of the *Guidelines for the Selection of Bible and Bible Storybooks* are:

Ms. Maureen Brennan
Ms. Judy Hanus
Mr. Edward Jahnke
Ms. Jackie Lackaff
Ms. Mary Morin
Ms. Lori Newsham
Mr. Kenneth E. Ortega
Sr. Jane Marie Osterholt, S.P.
Ms. Jeanne Pirc
Sr. Pat Thompson, sfcc
Ms. Laurie Vestal

III. Catechesis and Scripture

The ministry of catechesis provokes a desire to echo the faith to future generations. Catechists emulate the spirit of the Scripture through word and action.

The Divine Word becomes present in catechesis through the human word. So that it may bear fruit in man and generate

inner movements which expel indifference or uncertainty and lead him to embrace the faith, catechesis ought to express the word of God faithfully and present it suitably. Furthermore, the witness given by the life of both the catechist and the ecclesial community contributes very much to the efficacy of the catechesis.

Catechesis, therefore, should convey the word of God, as it is presented by the Church, in the language of the men to whom it is directed. When God revealed himself to the human race, he made the human word the sign of his word, expressing his work in language that belonged to a particular culture. The Church, to whom Christ entrusted the deposit of revelation, strives until the consummation of the world to transmit, explain, and interpret this work in a lively manner for the people of every culture and for men of every condition.

General Directory for Catechesis, 32

Catechists and parents are charged with the duty of echoing the faith. Therefore, the selection of Bible and Bible stories can be a monumental task. The integration of Scripture within the Catholic lifestyle is imperative.

The Catholic Church of the third millennium continue to define its role within an ever-changing world.

Today the human race is passing through a new stage of its history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the world...Hence we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well.

General Directory for Catechesis, 4

What may have sufficed for the faith formation of Catholics of past centuries may not be enough for the future generations of the Church. There needs to be a realistic perspective of society and its needs in order

to foster an effective and durable faith adherence.

Great numbers are drifting little by little into religious indifferentism, or are continuing in danger of keeping the faith without the dynamism that is necessary, a faith without effective influence on their actual lives. The question now is not one of merely preserving traditional religious customs, but rather one of also fostering an appropriate re-evangelization of men, obtaining their reconversion, and giving them a deeper and more mature education in the faith.

General Directory for Catechesis, 6

As Catholics of the third millennium we acknowledge the rich heritage of the Roman Catholic Church, and aspire to continue it into the new age. Scripture will continue to be a vital source of the Catholic faith. It is our duty to provide these guidelines as a means of adhering to the tradition, and at the same time, use translations pertinent to the learner.

IV. Scripture and Catholicism

To appreciate the complexity of Biblical selection, an historical introduction of scriptural study may be helpful.

The earliest translation of the Judeo-Christian Scripture was the *Septuagint*, a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures. At the end of the fourth century, St. Jerome created the *Vulgate*, a Latin version of the entire Bible. In 1604, King James I of England ordered an English translation, known as the *King James Version*.

Although all Christians accept the 27 books of the Christian Scriptures, there is dispute over the Hebrew Scriptures. In 1546, the Council of Trent recognized 46 books of the Old Testament. Protestants reject the authenticity of certain books including Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch and 1 and 2 Maccabees. Thus, there are distinct differences between Protestants and Catholics in Bible translations.

Archeological discoveries in the Holy Land produced new insights to Biblical understanding. In 1943 Pope Pius XII declared a development of Catholic scholastic study of scripture.

We ought to explain the original text which was written by the inspired author himself and has more authority and greater worth than any, even the very best translation, whether ancient or modern. This can be done all the more easily and fruitfully if to the knowledge of languages be joined a real skill in literary criticism of the same text.

Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*

In the spirit of Pius XII, the Second Vatican Council adhered to the investigation of biblical studies within four forms of criticism:

- textual- the attempt to recover the original form of a biblical text
- literary historical- consideration of authorship and writing styles surrounding a text
- form- consideration of the patterns of speech in relation to the pre-literary state of the text
- historical- consideration of events surrounding the writing of a text.

Inquisitive analyses of historical data, writings, and artifacts could enhance a more accurate understanding of ancient Israel and the life of Jesus.

Catholic study of Scripture, therefore, exposes the learner to elements of the history, forms of writing, and translation concerns which may enhance a better understanding of the Bible.

It is for these reasons that *The Guidelines for the Selection of Bible and Bible Storybooks* was prepared.

V. What Catholics should consider

In selecting an appropriate text, there are general questions to be addressed.

1. How important is the translation?

Translation is a concern for Catholics. Consider the following translations of 1 Kings 8: 59-60.

And let them say words, where with I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, that he may maintain the cause of his people Israel at all times as the matter shall require. That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is no other.

King James Version

And may the words of my supplication to the Lord be with the Lord our God day and night. That, as the need arises day by day, he may grant justice to his servant and justice to his people Israel.

The New English Bible

May the Lord our God remember this prayer day and night and do what is right for his servant and his people Israel day by day. Then all the people of the world will know the Lord is the only true God.

The Youth Bible and Inspirational
Study Bible

And may these words of my prayer be constantly before him day and night so that he helps me and all of Israel in accordance with our daily needs.

The Living Bible

May this prayer I have offered to the Lord, our God, be present to him day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and of his people Israel as each day requires, that all the peoples of the earth may know the Lord is God and there is no other.

New American Bible

The variation of translations is obvious. It is vital that the translation is conducive to the level of comprehension of the learner. If the person cannot understand the text, he or she may be less apt to read it.

2. How are the Scripture intended to be used?

How one intends on using the Bible or Bible stories should guide in the selection.

Introduction to the Bible.

Novice learners of the Bible may understand events if the translation uses simplistic language. Resource tools such as bar references, maps, and explanation of terms may assist the learner. Complex references, however, may overwhelm the learner.

Companion to Catechetical Study.

As primary educators of children, parents are obliged to assist in the religious formation of their children. Integrating Bible time into the daily routine espouses catechetical formation. Reading from the version used by the catechetical text assures consistency of translation. Publishers list the biblical version within the introduction of the text.

Scholastic Scripture Study.

Middle and secondary school students may enroll in Scripture courses. School personnel may require a specific translation. Reference tools such as side bar references, explanation of terms, footnotes, and historical notes may benefit the learner.

Applied Reflection on Scripture.

Youth ministry attempts to integrate the Biblical perspective with the experiential. There are versions developed strictly for this purpose. Testimonial accounts and journal writing are tools which promote this form of Bible use.

Gospel Reflection on Scripture.

Mature learners may wish to prepare for Sunday liturgy by reflecting on the Scriptures. Biblical versions congruent with the Lectionary are suggested. There are also companion texts for Gospel reflection.

3. What form of Scripture should children read at an early age?

Inviting children to explore Scripture may be best fostered through broad strokes presented through Bible stories. These texts, similar to those found in medical and dental offices, describe the themes of the Judeo-Christian history rather than giving detailed presentations.

Adults should determine whether they will read the Bible story to children or whether children will read the book independently. Adult storytelling may enhance a greater readability whereas a child's study requires simplistic interpretation.

4. How important are illustrations in Bible stories?

Cartoon-generated illustrations should display a quality similar to other children's books. In regard to Scripture illustrations should portray a loving God. Images depicting scary and perilous events, no matter how historically accurate, may imprint a negative view of God upon the child. Children's books should minimize violence.

5. Should the Bible story version reflect a diverse society?

Historically, most persons of the Bible were Middle Easterners. Rarely is this factor mirrored in Biblical texts. Since Bible stories are thematic in approach, it is important that the diversity of the society, as well as the universal Church, be presented to the learner at an early age. Catechetical texts also promote this concept within their curriculum.

6. Is the Bible or Bible storybook of my childhood still the best?

Biblical scholars are continuously uncovering data pertinent to the Catholic view of Scriptural events. Thus, Bible stories and Bible resource tools are constantly updated. Earlier versions of Bibles and Bible stories are still available, but may not necessarily be the best options.

7. Should children choose their own Bible storybook?

In general, if you allow children to choose books for reading, the same can be applied to Bible stories. Please note that if a child does not look at it when perusing the shelves, consider not buying that version. If it is not appealing, the child is less apt to read it.

8. Which Biblical versions are appropriate as gifts?

Consider the future use of the selection. Is it to serve as an heirloom or as a life reference? Some Bibles serve as a portfolio of valuable documents and family legacies. If such is the case, the version may not matter. There are Catholic versions. If, however, you wish to focus on Biblical study or reflection, the edition is important. Know the purpose of the selection prior to the purchase.

VI. Age-Appropriate Selection

There are specific considerations according to the abilities of the learner. The following statements may provide factors to be considered in the selection.

PreKindergarten-First Grade

1. Bible stories are appropriate for young learners. Introducing children to the main characters and events within the Scriptures can be effectively done through general depiction of biblical stories.
2. Visual imagery should be inviting to children. Animated depiction may be readily received by children rather than actual person depiction.
3. Imagery should present a positive impression of the Judeo-Christian history. Horrific depiction may have long-term consequences on impressionable minds.
4. Representation of human diversity should be present throughout the text.
5. The font of print and type style should be compatible to that of other children's books. A smaller font size may inhibit a child's interest.

Second Grade-Third Grade
(Sacramental preparation for Eucharist/
Reconciliation)

1. Bible stories, in greater detail, are appropriate for sacramental learners.
2. New Testament accounts depicting the humanity of Jesus foster an understanding of community, forgiveness, and sacrifice.
3. The language should be simple and comprehensible. Sacramental preparation does not impose a thorough comprehension of Scripture.
4. The font of print and type style should be compatible to that of other children's books. A smaller font size may inhibit a child's interest.
5. Parents wishing to read Scripture with children may consider the *Contemporary English Version*.

Fourth Grade-Fifth Grade

1. Introduction to the Bible. Chapter/verse text may begin with catechetical programs. Emphasis on the New Testament deserves attention as a moral and ethical guide for Scripture instruction. Selection of a New Testament version rather than an entire Bible may be appropriate.
2. Translation. *The New American Bible Version* is the recommended translation for publishers of religious education texts (K-6) according to the Office of the Catechism.
3. Soft bound copies. If the Bible is used for instruction, consideration of softcover texts may be appropriate. If given as a gift, a hardcover text may be preferred.

4. To enhance an accurate interpretation of Biblical events, simple footnotes and maps may be considered within the Bible edition.

Sixth Grade-Eighth Grade
(Middle School/ Junior High Youth Ministry)

Selection of a Bible is intent driven.

1. Lectionary-based curriculum. Programs rooted in the Lectionary use the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) Bible translation.
2. Introduction. A more in-depth look at the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) is appropriate. The learner may benefit from more inclusive reference tools such as a glossary, maps, footnotes, and historical accounts.
3. Companion. The Bible may also be used as a companion resource for a curriculum. Publishers list the version used within the curriculum.

Ninth Grade-Twelfth Grade
(Senior High Youth Ministry)

Selection of Bible is driven by intent.

1. Student study. If the Bible is for student study, reference tools such as footnotes, historical accounts, and columns for reflection and journaling may be considered.
2. Scholastic study. If the Bible is used in a scholastic manner, reference tools such as footnotes, glossary, maps, and historical accounts may prove beneficial.

3. Lectionary-based curriculum. Programs rooted in the Lectionary use the ICEL Bible translation.
3. Applied reflection. The Bible begins to have a direct application to daily life. Versions which integrate testimonials and experiential accounts may be considered.
4. Writing in the Bible. It is important to realize that the learner may view the Bible as a personal reference. Therefore, writing in the text should be seen as an integration of the Word within daily life, and not necessarily an irreverent act. Softcover texts may be considered.
5. Translation. A clear understanding of Scripture requires an appropriate translation for young adolescents. Again, the complexity does not necessarily heighten comprehension.

Adulthood

1. Heirloom. When selecting a Bible, the person should consider the intent of heirloom versus text. Heirloom Bibles are appreciated for their personal value. If so, the practicality of translation may not be a priority.
2. Selecting a Bible with the intent of making it part of one's personal life requires discernment.
3. Scripture study. If the Bible is for Scripture study, reference tools such as footnotes, historical accounts, and columns for reflection and journaling may be considered.
4. Gospel reflection. If the Bible is used for Gospel reflection, consider the

ICEL translation version which parallels the Sunday readings.

Special Needs

It is important to understand that learners vary in individual learning needs. Use data collected from consultants concerning general education and apply to scriptural formation.

Children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD

1. Visual imagery should be inviting. Color and background detail should not distract from the main figure in an illustration.
2. Language should be simple and comprehensible.
3. The font and type style should be comparable to that of other children's books. A smaller font may inhibit a learner's interest.

Children diagnosed with mental retardation.

1. Emphasis should be more on pictures and less on script.
2. Language should be simple and comprehensible.
3. Visual imagery should be inviting. Color and background detail should not distract from the main figure in an illustration.
4. Emphasis on symbols that appeal to the senses such as water, light, bread, rainbows, or wind.

Adults diagnosed with mental retardation.

1. More emphasis on text, however,

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| <p>pictures remain an important aspect.</p> <p>2. Language should be simple and comprehensible.</p> <p>3. The Bible should have a direct application to daily life.</p> | <p>Contemporary translations may be considered so that the learner may better relate to it.</p> <p>4. Emphasis on symbols that appeal to the senses such as water, light, bread, rainbows, or wind.</p> |
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VII. Appendices
A. References*

A selection of Bible and Bible stories may require a thorough investigation of multiple sources and references. The following resources are worth consideration.

Brey, S. P., & Ward, L.C. (1999). At home with the word: Sunday scriptures and reflections. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

Brown, R. (1990). Responses to 101 questions to the bible. New York: Paulist Press.

Dunning, J. (1993). Echoing God's word. Arlington, Va.: North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

Langenbrunner, N. (1982). How to understand the bible: Examining the tools of today's scripture scholars. Catholic Update, CO382. St. Louis: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Mick, L.E. (1999). Workbook for lectors and gospel readers. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

Pilch, John. (2000). Choosing a bible translation. Collegeville, Mn.: The Liturgical Press.

Scott, M. (1984). A popular introduction to reading the bible. Catholic Update, C1284. St. Louis: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Smith, V. (1989). Finding your way through the old testament. Catholic Update, C1189. St. Louis: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Smith, V. (1989). Whole bible at a glance- It's golden thread of meaning. Catholic Update, CO499. St. Louis: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Zimmerman, J.A. (1999). Living liturgy: Spirituality celebration and catechesis for sundays and solemnities. Collegeville, Mn.: The Liturgical Press.

*American Psychological Association Format for Writing (1995).

B. Bible and Bible Story Considerations

Bible Stories

Beginners Bible. (1989). Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan Publishers.

Catholic Children's Bible. (1983). New York: Regina Press.

Children's Illustrated Bible. (1997). New York: Dorling-Kindersley, Inc.

Golden Children's Bible. (1993). New York: Golden Books Publishing Co., Inc.

Eager Reader Bible Storybook, Catholic Edition. (1994). Huntington, In.: Our Sunday Visitor.

Holy Bible: Children's Illustrated Edition. (1995). New York: American Bible Society.

Favorite Bible Story. (1998). New York: Dorling-Kindersley, Inc.

Family Bible. (1997). New York: Dorling-Kindersley, Inc.

Bibles

Bible for Young Catholics, Heffernan Edition. (1999). Boston: Pauline Book and Media.

Catholic Serendipity Bible, New American Bible. (1999). Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing. (For small group study).

Catholic Student Bible, New American Bible. (1995). New York: Oxford University Press.

Catholic Youth Bible, NRSV. (2000). Winona, Mn.: St. Mary's Press.

International Student Bible for Catholics. (1999). Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

International Study Bible for Catholics, Contemporary English Version. (1993). Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers. (New Testament only).

New American Bible, St. Joseph Edition. (1992). New York: Catholic Bible Publishing Co.

Noah's Ark Bible, New American Bible. (1987). Grand Rapids, Mi.: World Publishing.

NOTE: If researching the Bible on the Internet, please use the guidelines for web use in Appendix N.