

Scripture Resource Guide

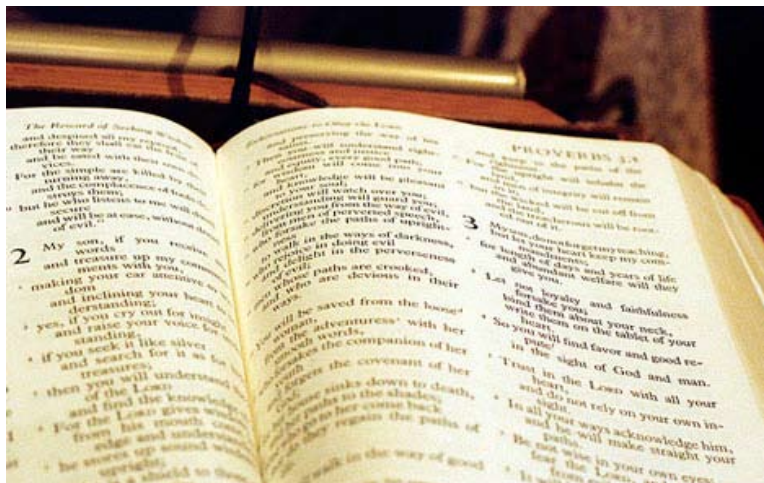
Compiled by the Diocese of Joliet Religious Education Office

A Guide to Catholic Scripture Study

Joyce Donahue

As Catholics, rooted in Christ, Sacred Scripture and Tradition are our primary sources of God's revelation of God. (*Dei Verbum*, 9-10) When, after Vatican II, ordinary Catholics were encouraged to read sacred Scripture for themselves, the challenge the Magisterium handed on to local parish leadership was to provide good guidance for that endeavor.

Good Catholic Scripture interpretation assists people to learn "what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words" (*Dei Verbum*, 12). It does this, using a mix of the following methods and approaches: the historical-critical method; literary analysis; approaches based on Tradition (the Canon of the Bible as a whole, Jewish Tradition, or history of the influence of the text in the Church); approaches using the human sciences (sociology, anthropology or psychology); and contextual approaches (liberationist, feminist, etc). These methods are taken from the Pontifical Bible Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1993, pp. 5-18.



“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

(*Second Council of Orange, Canon 7*)

For Catholics, interpretation of scripture is never “fundamentalist” – literally based on the text by itself. “The fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life.” (PBC, p. 18) People who do not receive guidance in how to read Scripture in the Catholic tradition can mistakenly fall into this mode, or into the mode of seeing all Scripture as merely support for apologetics. They can miss the fact that God's Word is relational, alive and active – and has something to say to them today, in their life, in their situation. They can also miss the community value of shared Scripture study, through which people are allowed to hear what God is saying to others through the Word.

Parish leaders, then, should be aware of all these factors when choosing materials, programs, or speakers to assist their parishioners in understanding Sacred Scripture. It is important to know what good Scripture study materials should accomplish. Likewise, it is crucial to understand the learners, their abilities, needs and desires. Only then can an informed choice be made about what materials are best for a particular parish to use.

A Simple Guide to Bible Translations

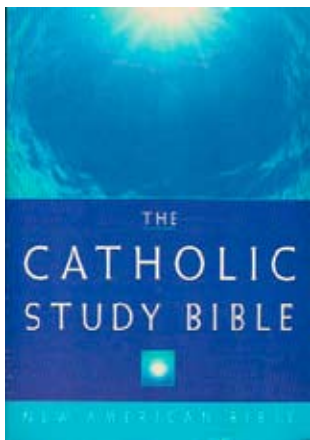
Although there are a variety of Catholic and Protestant translations, only the *New American Bible* is approved both for personal study and for public worship by English-speaking American Catholics. Other versions, such as the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* and the *New Jerusalem Bible* may be used for personal study only.

Catholic Study Bibles – With Supplementary Materials

- Catholic Study Bible* – Oxford University Press (pictured, left)
- Catholic Personal Study Edition* – Fireside Catholic Publishing
- The New Catholic Answer Bible* – Fireside Catholic Publishing

Targeted Study Bibles for Different Groups

- The Catholic Couples Bible* – Fireside Catholic Publishing
- The Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible* – Fireside Catholic Publishing
- The Fireside Catholic Youth Bible* – Fireside Catholic Publishing



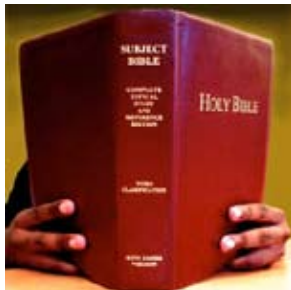
Recommended Catholic Bible Studies

Names and descriptions of these resources are taken from an annotated resource list for adult faith formation released by the **National Conference on Catechetical Leadership** (NCCL), an adult faith formation resource book compiled by the **Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**, and a Scripture resource guide from the **Diocese of Saginaw**. For additional questions, please feel free to contact Joyce Donahue or Paul Jarzembowski at the Diocese of Joliet Religious Education Office at (815) 727-6411.

Six Weeks with the Bible

(Loyola Press)

A guided discovery for groups with little or no prior knowledge of the Bible. Thought-provoking questions apply passages to daily life with subject matter for seasonal, thematic, and continuing groups. Over twenty-four workbooks are each divided into six concise ninety-minute segments that introduce one book of the Bible. There is also a teen version of this Bible Study.



Little Rock Scripture Study

(The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn.)

A complete Bible study program with more than thirty courses. Materials includes commentaries, study guides, video, and audio tapes of varying lengths. Topic groups are: leadership training, foundation, thematic studies, Gospels, Old Testament studies, early Church writings.

Focus Bible Study

(Living the Good News)

This study features a volume for each one of the four Gospels. It is an in-depth scripture study with questions, journal meditations and group activities, ideal for study groups, small Christian communities or individual study.

Denver Catholic Bible School Program

(Paulist Press)

A thorough and extensive four-year program designed to give those who participate in it a thorough knowledge of the Bible, as well as the ability to teach and communicate it to others (i.e. to then facilitate a Bible study); uses critical and historical approaches and a wide range of teaching methods from lectures and written homework, to small group sharing and creative activities.

Threshold Bible Study

(Twenty-Third Publications)

Developed by Stephen J. Binz, this Bible study is based around thirty themes for both personal study and group discussion including Advent, the Passion, Eucharist, the Mysteries of the Rosary, stewardship of the earth, the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, Jerusalem, among others.

Spanish Language Scripture Resources

Loyola: Six Weeks with the Bible
(Gospels only)

Little Rock Scripture Study (Exodus, plus all New Testament resources)

La Biblia Católica para Jóvenes
Catholic Youth Study Bible (Spanish)
www.bibliaparajovenes.org, available through RCL/Benziger representative

Biblio Bilingue (bilingual, with deuterocanonicals) from American Bible Society; http://store.bibles.com/Templates/ProductList/Bibles.aspx?Catalog=ABS_NEW&Category=Bibles_Spanish

(NOTE: The American Bible Society Study Bible with Deuterocanonicals in Spanish is currently out of print)

Mark your calendar and watch for more information on

Diocese of Joliet Scripture Festival

The Word of God is Alive and Active

Join us for a one-of-a-kind resource and formation event for those who choose materials for or facilitate Scripture study programs in their parish, as well as adult faith leaders, deacons and priests, and pastoral associates, among others.

Saturday, October 25, 2008

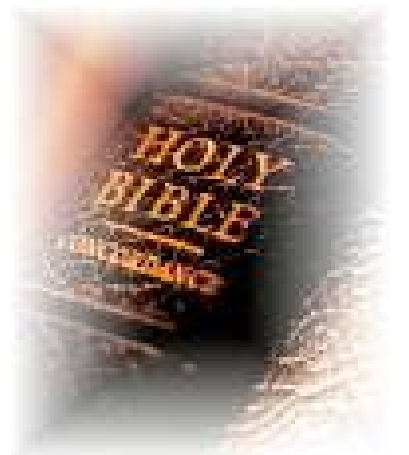
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (tentative)

(Coinciding with the closing of the 2008 Synod of the Word of God in Rome)

Keynote Speaker:

Rev. Donald Senior, C.P.
President of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago

The location of this event and other details will be announced soon on the Diocesan website and in "Leaven."



Scripture Study Resources for Lectionary and Small Faith-Sharing Groups

At Home with the Word

Annual publication from Liturgy Training Publications, features texts of weekly lectionary readings and materials for group or private reflection. www.ltp.org

Celebrating the Lectionary

Uses the Sunday readings as the springboard for weekly faith formation sessions: scripture sharing, discussion, and engaging, age-appropriate activities. Intergenerational materials available. www.celebratingthelectionary.com

Lights Camera... Faith! A Movie Lover's Guide to Scripture – for Cycles A, B & C.

Written and organized by Sr. Rose Pacatte and Fr. Peter Malone, these are three books which explore the movies in the light of the Sunday Scriptures. (a fourth book was recently published on the Ten Commandments and film). Each Sunday corresponds to a popular or recent movie. <http://www.pauline.org/store/searchresults.php>

Living the Good News – Lectionary Based Program

Published fall, winter and spring, this program provides detailed catechist guides, journals, take-home resources and other resources for all ages. Intergenerational program materials available. Catholic curriculum is online at http://www.livingthegoodnews.com/ca_lectbased.htm

Opening the Scriptures: a Guide to the Catechism for use with the Sunday Readings

Rev. Kris D. Stubna, Our Sunday Visitor, 2002. This handy guide gives a correlation between the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the readings, perfect for setting up a curriculum based on the sequence of the readings of the Lectionary cycles. <http://catalog.osv.com/Catalog.aspx?SimpleDisplay=true&ProductCode=976>

Disciples in Prayer

Cycles A, B & C, with a CD for small-groups and prayer. www.usccbpublishing.org or www.ocp.org

Exploring the Sunday Readings

Weekly handout with commentaries, questions, action response, open & closing prayers, and question of the week. Subscription service with bi-monthly shipping. <http://www.twentythirdpublications.com/exploring.php>

Sunday by Sunday

A four-page lectionary based weekly that invites adults, groups and individuals to reflect on the Sunday readings, featuring shared prayer, justice-oriented activities, up-to-date scripture interpretation, and the gospel in reader parts that draw adults into dialog with Jesus and one another. www.goodgroundpress.com

Additional Resources for Scripture Study

A Catholic Response to Biblical Fundamentalism

(Ronald Witherup, S.S.; Liturgical Press, 2001)

Biblical scholar and Sulpician priest Ronald Witherup addresses the source and direction of Biblical fundamentalism. He reviews the unique Catholic approach to the Bible and contrasts the position of fundamentalists, and proposes strategies and responses for encountering fundamentalists.

New Jerome Biblical Commentary

(Raymond Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, Ronald Murphy; Prentice Hall, 1990)

This is a compact commentary on the entire Bible that readers can use to familiarize themselves with the methods and paths followed by biblical scholars. It features current theories on dating, historical reconstruction, and archaeological information. Contemporary perspectives and topical articles of an introductory nature include hermeneutics, canonicity, Old Testament themes, and coverage of biblical theology.

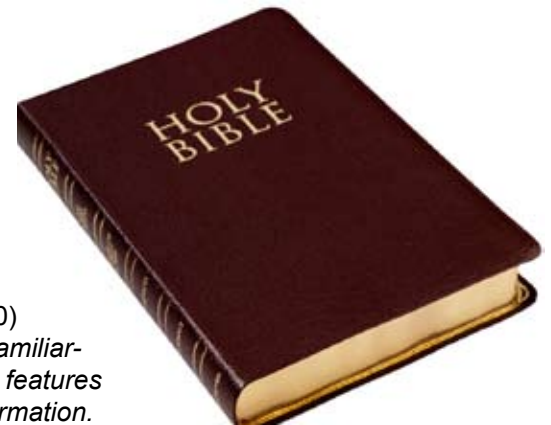
Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels

(Burton Throckmorton; Thomas Nelson, 1992)

A classic since 1949, this resource presents Matthew, Mark, and Luke printed side-by-side for easy and enlightening comparative study. Fully revised and updated using the New Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible, it features a readable type face and an effective system for comparison.

God's Library (Joe Paprocki; Loyola Press, 2005)

This is a Catholic introduction to the world's greatest book. It presents a basic understanding of the Bible in easy-to-understand language, explaining the organization of the Bible, the different literary styles, key figures, and methods.



Basic Tips on Leading Scripture Study

Paul Jarzembowski

When we get the opportunity to lead a Bible Study, or if someone else comes to us ready to organize and facilitate one, what do we do?

If the responsibility falls to us, we might get a bit nervous, especially if we don't feel we have enough education in Scripture or Biblical history. We can get equally concerned if a parishioner with little or no training wants to take on this task. More often than not, catechetical leaders will use or have a facilitator follow a pre-packaged Scripture Study program (like one of the ones listed on the previous pages). However, we do not recommend parishes to simply hand their Bible Study leaders a book or a package of materials, wishing them well and saying "have at it."



Here are a few tips you might consider:

- Be sure whoever is leading the study sees their role as a facilitator, not a teacher (this is especially crucial when the leader does not have training in this area); it is also essential that the leaders do not proof-text (using one verse or statement from the Bible to prove a point) during their time as the facilitator.
- On the other hand, you can bring in guest presenters to talk about the Biblical and historical context into which these stories are written. You can also use video resources from the Diocesan Media Center on Scripture and Biblical history (for more about this, contact Jeanne Pirc at 815-727-6411, ext. 267).
- Encourage your Bible Study leaders to attend seminars, workshops, or classes on the Scriptures and effective ways of interpreting them.
- Consider focusing your Bible Study experiences on the less-familiar books, passages, and stories from the Scriptures, rather than the popular ones such as Isaiah or John. It might yield more creative discussions.
- Have a co-leader help facilitate the sessions. This will give a second person skills and mentoring for future programs; it would also take the burden off of one individual and it might give a balanced perspective to the group.
- Be creative in marketing the program to the parish; consider promoting the Scripture Study in the larger community and in the neighborhoods around the church; also consider marketing it to younger adults (college students, young singles, engaged couples, new parents, etc.).

The overall goal of Catholic Bible Study is to help people better understand and appreciate Scripture, so that it has meaning for intellectual reasons (i.e. what did this mean to our ancestors over two thousand years ago?) and for spiritual reasons (i.e. what does the Bible mean to me and to us as Catholics today?). So long as these goals are understood by Scripture Study facilitators, the results will certainly be favorable.



Online Resources

The New American Bible

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible>

The official New American Bible translation on the web, maintained by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

Basic Sites for Scripture Study

<http://academics.smcvt.edu/pcouture/>

Maintained by Paul Couture, S. S. E., Saint Michael's College, Colchester VT

Pontifical Bible Commission

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_index.htm

The official Vatican website for Catholic Bible interpretation.

The Narrow Gate

<http://faculty.cbhs.org/rmartin/index.htm>

A site for the novice learner, maintained by Richard Martin, a former Scripture teacher and religion dept chair at Christian Brothers High School in Memphis, Tennessee.