

January 26, 2020

Dear friends,

As you probably know, this 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time has been designated, from now on, by Pope Francis as being the “Sunday of the Word of God.” Pope Francis offers us a wonderful opportunity on this Sunday to re-appreciate the power of God’s words of truth and life in the Bible, which all flow from Jesus His Son, who is God’s Word-made-flesh, through which we have the hope of salvation. Compared with many of our Protestant brothers and sisters, Catholics in general are not as well versed in the Sacred Scriptures. Sadly, this has been the case for many years. Thus, we have the chance to heighten our resolve to read, study and reflect more often on God’s holy words, in order to hopefully become closer in our loving relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and with all our brothers and sisters around us.

Over the next few weeks, there will be articles in our bulletin that will offer helpful insights regarding the Bible (a word, by the way, which comes from the Greek term “biblia,” meaning “the books,” suggesting that the Bible is more like a collection of individual books or writings, as if it were a library of holy inspiration). If you do not have a Bible, please contact me or the Parish Office, so that we may provide you with a copy. If we’re to follow Jesus as true Christian disciples, then we need to have a clear understanding as to what His teachings are to live out, so as to prevent our getting lost on the way Home to Heaven. May God’s Spirit move your heart and mind to make the most of this new opportunity by deepening your passionate hunger for embracing the richness of Sacred Scripture!



Your Servant in the Lord,

Fr. Steve ☺

10 BASICS ABOUT THE BIBLE, ACCORDING TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1—“Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” {from Second Vatican Council’s document called “Dei Verbum” (God’s Word), section 9}

2—God is the primary Author of the Bible, revealing through secondary authors (humans) all that God wishes to make known to humankind as to what is necessary for our salvation. Under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, these chosen human authors used their particularly talents, skills, limitations, and experience, within their specific cultural contexts, to convey in varied ways (through prose, poetry, analogy, allegory, metaphor, story, history, and other literary forms) God’s love for all of God’s Creation, especially human beings made in God’s image and likeness, and God’s desire for all people to be saved. The Catholic understanding of biblical inspiration is that God used such authors not through a dictation model (like a CEO dictating a letter to a secretary), but more like ambassadors (like the President giving the gist of a message to another nation through the words, talents, and cultural understanding of his/her representative there.)

3—The Bible is divided up into 2 main sections—The Old and New Testament. Both are important, for the Old Testament prepares for the New and the New fulfills the Old. The New Testament never voided the Old Testament (which Marcionism heretically taught in 2nd century.)

4—There are 73 books in Catholic Bibles (66 in most Protestant ones, since 7 Old Testament books in the Catholic translations are not seen as divinely inspired: 1st & 2nd Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, Judith, and Tobit.) In Catholic translations, 46 are in the Old Testament and 26 are in the New Testament. All the books of the Bible are considered inspired by God.

5—For Christians, the Gospels are considered the “heart of all the Scriptures” (from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #125), the preeminent (most important) books in the Bible, since they are the main source of the life and teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If a passage from another section of the Bible contradicts what’s in the Gospels, then it is not necessary for salvation. “The four Gospels occupy a central place because Christ Jesus is their center.” (Catechism, #139)

6—“All Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ (the Word of God made flesh), because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and...is fulfilled in Christ.” (Catechism, #134)

7—The Bible teaches, without error, all that is necessary for salvation, not just for the reader of the Bible, but for the Church and the world. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that one can be saved without having heard the Gospel proclaimed to them or knowing of Jesus Christ, the Church or the Bible. However, there may be errors in language, historical understanding, or scientific knowledge, since it may be information not necessary for our salvation.

8—It’s important to understand the original cultural & historical context, as well as the original secondary authors’ intent to more clearly know what truth God is trying to convey in passages.

9—The Church has 3 criteria for proper biblical interpretation: a) Pay attention to how a passage is seen in light of the whole Bible. (An interpretation should not wildly counter what’s in the rest of the Bible.) b) The Bible is part of Church Tradition. (Thus, no proper interpretation of the Bible can contradict Church teaching.) C) Pay attention to the “analogy of faith.” (In other words, what one biblical truth puts forth has to be connected with other truths in the larger view of our faith in Christ. Examples: What we say about Mary affects how we view Jesus. What we say about Genesis affects how we view Christ. What we say about covenant affects our interpreting Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.”)

10---Caution must be shown in how we interpret Bible passages either literally or figuratively. Some passages may have spiritual understandings in more than one way.

(Stay tuned for more articles to come, regarding the Bible.)

