

Incorporating Scripture Into Everyday Life

“Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ.” *St. Jerome*

“One of the greatest gifts of the Second Vatican Council has been a deepened awareness of the importance of Sacred Scripture in our lives. We have grown to know and love the Bible.” *Archbishop Vincent Nichols.*

“Just as the life of the Church is strengthened through more frequent celebration of the Eucharistic mystery, similarly we may hope for a new stimulus for the life of the Spirit from a growing reverence for the word of God, which lasts forever.” *Dei Verbum* 26

Pope Benedict encouraged “a new season of greater love for sacred Scripture on the part of every member of the People of God.” *Verbum Domini* 72

“Average Catholics asked today how often they read the Bible likely would say that they do not read the Bible regularly. However, if asked how often they read Scripture, the answer would be different. Practicing Catholics know they read and hear Scripture at every Mass. Many also recognize that basic prayers Catholics say, such as the Our Father and the Hail Mary, are scriptural. But for most Catholics, the Scripture they hear and read is not from the Bible. It is from a worship aid in the pew.” *Msgr. Daniel Kutys usccb.org/bible*

“A considerable number of Catholics who attend Mass on Sundays and weekdays will have sought familiarity with the readings beforehand, but a large majority will come ‘cold’ to the readings. Without preparation, and (at times) with no text of the readings, often at the mercy of inadequate proclamation, they pick up very little.” *Fr. Adrian Graffy, member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission*

In *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict reminds the Church that the word of God lies at the basis of all authentic Christian spirituality (86.) He recalls the sacramentality of the word (56.) Just as spiritual preparation is required of those who approach the Table of the Eucharist, likewise preparation is needed in order to be nourished at the Table of the Word.

A prior reading of the scriptures to be proclaimed is a necessary component of this preparation. Quiet reading of the texts in a spirit of prayer enables a fruitful reception of the word of God. Just as preparation of the heart is necessary to receive the Lord in Word and Sacrament, so a readying of the mind is particularly important to receive the message of the Scriptures.

Identifying and reading the chosen Sunday or weekday text **in a Bible**, rather than in a missal or lectionary or worship aid helps people grow in confidence in managing their Bibles, and often leads them to explore further than the text in question. They become familiar with the context of the reading, and are able to benefit from the explanatory notes customary in all Catholic bibles.

Choosing a Catholic Bible: www.usccb.org/bible/approved-translations

“All Catholics should have a Bible, all Catholics should read the Bible and all Catholics need to have regular prayer experiences where they open the book and let it become the word of God speaking to them.”

Archbishop Terrence Predergast, S.J.
cited on usccb.org/bible/understanding-the-bible/study

Incorporating

Scripture into Everyday Life

Incorporation: (defs.)

- making something part of a whole
- when territory is acquired – taken into a larger body
- consolidating two or more things; union in (or into) one body
- learning (of values or attitudes) that is taken within yourself
- that type of acquisition or learning; the acquisition of skill or knowledge
- “Incorporate” is a more active version of the word “include.” If you “incorporate” you are adding something to the mix
- To unite or merge with something already in existence
- To gather in; to take in.

- To give substance or material form to; to embody
- “*incorporare*” (Late Latin) – to form into a body
- To integrate; fold; build in
- To make something an integral part of something else
- Synonyms: embrace, embody, assimilate, accommodate, knit, fuse, mingle, meld
- The physiological process of taking in and uniting with something especially by chemical reaction
- The psychological process of identifying with or introjecting something

- The cooking process of mixing items together. “You don’t want to overmix or overwork it; just lightly stir it with a spatula or spoon by hand. Don’t get out the beaters or the tabletop mixer. Rather do it gently by hand without overdoing it.”

PSALMS: The Prayer Book of the Bible.

- Choose a psalm verse
- Begin a psalm journal
- Copy/write down by hand the citation and its number and verse every day for a month. Your goal is to memorize the psalm citation and its source.
- Add any personal reflections, concerns, questions, and/or inspirations regarding your chosen verse to your psalm journal if so moved.
- Here are some suggested verses (but be sure to scroll through your Bible to find a verse that resonates to you.)
 - “I will trust in you” Ps 55
 - “You are my fortress” Ps 59
 - “You have delivered my soul from death” Ps 116
- Liturgy of the Hours/The Daily Office Prayed in community or individually.

The Liturgy of the Hours

Some Practical Information

(Excerpts from Sr. Janet Baxendale, S.C. in America, 3/10/90 & Origins, 11/11/93)

WHAT IS THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS?

1. Liturgical Prayer ...the public prayer of the Church, that is, of Christ and his people.

2. Prayer which is intimately related to the Eucharist and which the Church understands as a preparation for Eucharist and a continuation of the action of the Eucharist throughout the day.

3. Prayer which is about the sanctification of time, that is, of each day, and is linked with Feasts and Seasons of the Liturgical Year.

4. Prayer which relies heavily on Scripture....the Psalms and the Canticles as

well as readings from the Old and New Testaments.

5. Prayer with a long history in the Church going back to the first centuries.

6. Prayer which has a basic formal structure, both within each individual hour, and within the day.

7. Prayer which is prayed communally in formal Church gatherings, informal groups, and families, but which may also be prayed by individuals who are not able to pray it in common. Whether prayed communally or by individuals, The Liturgy of the Hours is always the prayer of the Church, linking those praying with the praying Church throughout the world and with the Communion of Saints in heaven.

8. It is virtually unknown and untried by many, many Catholics. It is the best-kept secret of Liturgical Reform. But as a general reform, the mandate of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy that “the laity, too, are encouraged to recite the Divine Office either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually” has been virtually ignored.

9. The hours, particularly Morning and Evening Prayer, are attuned both to the natural rhythm of day and night, light and dark, and to the rhythms of human living.

Resources: www.divineoffice.org
www.universalis.com

Lectio Divina

“All...should immerse themselves in the scriptures by constant spiritual reading and diligent study...in order to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine scriptures.”(DV 25)

First, it is encouraged as preparation for liturgical hearing. We know from daily experience that it is not enough to hear a biblical reading in order to automatically derive spiritual fruit from it. It is not the material sound of the syllables that is life-giving. The hearer must understand with an enlightened faith the meaning of the message God is conveying. The soul’s doors must be opened to the One who makes himself lovingly available in his Word. Can this be done by one who has never picked up a Bible? The council would say that we must always have it in our hands.

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)

(Excerpts from www.ignatianspirituality.com & www.ocarm.org)

The method is quite simple. If a beginner, it is better to choose a passage from one of The Gospels or epistles, usually ten or fifteen verses. Some who regularly engage in this method of prayer choose the reading or the Gospel for the Mass of the day.

First go to a quiet place and recall that you are about to listen to the Word of God. Then read the scripture passage aloud to let yourself hear the words. Some may read the passage aloud slowly more than once.

When you finish reading, pause and recall if some word or phrase stood out or something touched your heart. If so, pause and savor the insight, feeling, or understanding. Then go back

and read the passage again because it will have a fuller meaning. Pause again and note what happened. If you want to have a dialogue with God/Jesus in response to the word, you should follow the promptings of your heart. This kind of reflective listening allows the Holy Spirit to deepen awareness of God's taking the initiative to speak with us.

Some points you may consider for reflection: "What gift does this passage lead me to ask from the Lord?" "What does this passage call me to do?" "What personal intention am I moved to make throughout the day in response to this experience?"

A more traditional yet similar approach is the consideration of the four possible stages of *Lectio Divina*:

Stage one is *lectio* (reading) where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us

Stage two is *meditatio* (reflection) where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us.

Stage three is *oratio* (response) where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God.

The final stage is *contemplatio* (rest) where let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. Obviously

this transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live and the way we live is the test of the authenticity of our prayer. We must take what we read in the Word of God into our daily lives.

The practice of *Lectio Divina* as a way of praying the Scriptures has been a fruitful source of growing in relationship with Christ for many centuries and is being rediscovered by many individuals and groups. The Word of God is alive and active and will transform each of us if we open ourselves to receive what God wants to give us.

RESOURCES

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www.usccb.org. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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