

## SACRED SCRIPTURE

- And he said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Gospel of Luke)
- Sacred Scripture, written under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit, has God as its author. In it, the story of salvation unfolds through God’s saving actions and words. Scripture is a source of guidance for our lives here on earth. The Psalmist says: "Your Word is a lamp to their steps and a light for my path" (see Ps. 119:105).

### IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT SACRED SCRIPTURE

- **Divine Authorship**—God is the principal author of Sacred Scripture, the Bible. He inspired the human authors (for example, Moses, Isaiah, David, Matthew, John, and Paul), to write what he wanted. The human authors wrote according to their own various times and cultures, literary styles, and modes of expression. Nevertheless, all that the inspired writers attest must be regarded as intended by the Holy Spirit.
- **No Errors**—The Sacred Scriptures teach the truth faithfully and without error. God cannot make a mistake, nor can he lie. His Word to us is his Revelation, which he intends for us to know for our salvation. In his loving goodness, he reveals the mystery of his will. He intends that we share in the life of God now and forever in Heaven. The Bible is the Word of God. It is wisdom from on high. We must be attentive to it,

believe it, and obey it. Catholics, however do not idolise the bible. It is often said, particularly by Protestants and Muslims, that Christianity is ‘a religion of the book’. Christianity is not a religion of the book. Christianity is a religion of a person: Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity Incarnate, true God and true man. The focus of Scripture is to lead us to a knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

- Even though the Bible is free from error, this does not mean that we can read everything in the Bible as literally true. The account of creation in the book of Genesis is not intended as a manual of physics. The book of Songs is a long love poem, not to be read as a historical narrative. The book of Job is a drama, not to be read as a description of a real factual event. Different kinds of writings will have different kinds of meanings.
- The Bible must also be read in “the living Tradition of the whole Church.” The deposit of faith, all that Jesus commanded, taught and did, was given to the apostles and disciples (see Matt. 28:18-20; Jn. 20:30; 21:25). That whole deposit, the “living Tradition” of the Church, has been carefully passed down and guarded by the successors of St. Peter, who was given the authority of the keys of the Kingdom (see Matt. 16:18-19). Sacred Scripture came from that “living Tradition.” It was the successors of Peter and the apostles, the pope and bishops in union with him, who authorized the canon of Scripture. Still today, the pope and bishops are the final authority and guardians of the whole deposit of faith (the living Tradition) and the Sacred Scripture.

- The Church strongly encourages everyone to read the Word of God for private devotion, to memorize it, and to study it diligently.

### **THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

- In fact, the New Testament is best understood in light of the Old Testament. It was St. Augustine who said that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. However, the New Covenant does fulfil the Old. It supersedes the Old. There will be no new testaments. Jesus has come, has redeemed us, has sent his Holy Spirit, and we await his final coming to complete his original purpose to draw us back to God the Father.

### **SACRED SCRIPTURE IN CATHOLIC LIFE TODAY**

- It has always been the case that the Catholic Church has venerated the Bible “as she venerates the Lord’s Body” (CCC 103). Therefore, reading and studying the Bible should always be rooted in prayer, especially meditation. “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105). “Your Word means more to me than silver and gold.

### **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD AT MASS**

- The first half of the Catholic Mass is the proclamation of the Word of God. This is called the Liturgy of the Word. It is God speaking to us his people. At Mass, the first reading is taken from the books of the Old Testament which relates how God acted in the past with his Chosen People, Israel.
- A responsorial Psalm follows. The Psalms were originally composed as prayers. (They are generally attributed to King David.) The Psalms provide us the opportunity to participate in a prayerful dialogue with God. At Sunday Mass, there is

another reading from one of the books of the New Testament (not a Gospel). What follows in both instances is a reading from the Gospel. This is always accompanied with signs of special honour (such as processional carrying of the book, incense, candle bearers, respectful standing and the Sign of the Cross). This is because the Gospels expressly concern Jesus’ life and his words. The Scripture verse chanted before the Gospel. The homily follows the readings. It is an exposition of the readings with applications for daily living. The homily is always given by the priest or deacon.

- The readings for Sundays have been arranged so that over a three-year period almost all the New Testament and a variety of texts from the Old Testament will have been read. Each new cycle starts on the first Sunday of the season of Advent, four weeks before Christmas. The Gospel reading in year A is generally from Matthew, year B from Mark, and year C from Luke.

### **SACRED SCRIPTURE ON ITSELF**

- “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:14-17)