

Chaplain's Bulletin January 22, 2023



Dear Folks,

I will make you fishers of men.

This Sunday is dedicated as “Sunday of the Word of God.” Of course, we know that the first meaning of “Word of God” is Jesus Himself (John 1:1 and following), but we have long had the tradition of calling the Bible the Word of God and holding it in high reverence. God inspires many things, but nothing else is inspired on the level of Sacred Scripture. It is not just the power of the authoritative teaching, but we believe that Jesus is present to us in a special way when we read the Scriptures with an open heart. They are, of course, most powerful in the liturgy, especially the Eucharistic liturgy.

One of my goals in life is getting Catholics to know the Bible better. I’ve heard many Catholics tell me that the Church never encouraged them to read the Bible. I’ve worked very hard to make sure a lot of Catholics will not be able to say that anymore. Of course, it isn’t just reading, but getting to know, to go from being foreign tourists in the Bible to being at home in the Bible.

Good Catholic Bibles always have footnotes and cross references to give us some background on the language and the culture, and to see how everything is woven together.

For beginners, I do not recommend starting at the beginning and reading straight through without help. Some intrepid souls may do that, but most drop out. There are wonderful resources out there, including Ascension Press and the Augustine Institute. If you have access to Formed.org there are loads of good things there. If you don’t have immediate access to resources, I urge you not to wait. If you start reading through the Gospels a bit every day that will be a great beginning. You don’t have to do much, but every day, every day, every day. I challenge you if you do that, it will change the way you think. An alternative would be to read the Mass Readings every day. The three-year Sunday cycle and the two-year weekday cycle in the Roman lectionary will give you a very large amount of Scripture. A few minutes a day can make a huge difference over time, and you might just find you are hungering for more. We can never get enough in this life.

After eight years in the seminary and thirty-five years of priesthood, I find that the more I learn about the Scriptures, the more wonderful I see they are, and the more I want to explore further. The various books have a wonderful diversity, but they all fit together in one big story of salvation. We also learn that the Scriptures and the liturgy are interwoven: the Bible is very liturgical, and the liturgy is very Biblical. Knowing the Catholic faith is not just getting various tidbits of doctrine and morality but seeing how it all fits together in one big story of salvation, the story of God seeking to gather us to Himself and how this makes sense out of our lives. This will all help us to know Jesus better and share Jesus better. It is something everyone can do.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim