

3 – The Bible

**Basic
Instructions
Before
Leaving
Earth**

Sacred Scripture contains the Word of God in the words of man.

God is the author of the Sacred Scriptures. He inspired human writers who wrote as true authors, using their own language, style, and powers.

But God worked in them and by them so that they consigned to writing “whatever he wanted written, and no more” (CCC 105-106).

Because God is the divine author and everything affirmed by the human writers is affirmed by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures always teach the truth (CCC 107).

How we should read the Bible

The bible should not be read in a literalistic way, literally, but with attention to what the human writers intend to affirm and to what God wants to reveal through them.

Examples:

When Christ warns that it is better for you to cut your hand off if it causes you to sin (Mark 9:43), He is using a literary metaphor. However, a literalistic reading would take this teaching of Christ at face value and wrongly encourage cutting off portions of the body that cause one to sin!

Psalm 73:20 speaks of God awakening, this is not meant to teach that Yahweh actually sleeps at night and gets up in the morning, but rather this figurative language describes how God, after remaining seemingly unresponsive to a situation, begins to take action like a man awaking from sleep.

There are three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it.

1. The content and unity of the whole of Scripture
2. Reading Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church
3. Analogy of faith = coherence of truths of faith among themselves

Pay attention "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture".

The books of the bible are composed differently

historical narrative

the law

poetry

wisdom literature

prophecy

apocalyptic literature

the gospels

the epistles

Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart.

The Old and New Testaments are to be treated and interpreted as a whole.

Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church".

According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture.

There is cohesion between Scripture and the doctrines of the faith of the Church.

Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church".

Belief in God the Father, Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.

The death, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

The holiness of the Church and the communion of saints.

Christ's second coming, the Day of Judgement and salvation of the faithful.

Be attentive to the analogy of faith, the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

The sacred writers are not be set in opposition to one another or to the faith and teaching of the Church.

Examples:

Matthew 23:9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven

Jesus is denouncing the Jewish scribes and Pharisees for rejecting Him as their Messiah, in particular for their hypocrisy in elevating themselves above others with titles such as “teacher” and “master.” The Jewish teachers affected those titles because they supposed that a teacher formed the man or gave him real life. They sought, therefore, to be called “father,” as if they were the source of truth rather than God. Christ taught that the source of all life and truth is God, and no one ought to seek or receive a title that properly belongs to Him. No one should be as revered as God is.

Examples:

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Matthew 6:7

The major theme in all pagan prayer, was that the outward actions or words are the efficacious aspect of prayer. The correct formula and names were vital. And performing the correct formula and names was sure to bring about the desired result. The gods themselves seemed to have very little say in the matter.

Hence, pagan prayer often entailed a set of formulaic prayers to various deities, since the pray-er couldn't know for sure which deity or which formula was correct.

The pagan gods did not know what people wanted before asking, whereas the Jewish/Christian God "knows what you need before you ask." He further notes that Jesus, at other times, praises repetition in prayer (e.g., the parable of the unjust judge).

It is therefore the attitude towards and perception of God that Jesus condemns.

Literal and Spiritual Senses

Literal

Spiritual

- Allegorical
- Moral
- Anagogical

literal sense

The meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis (critical analysis), following the rules of sound interpretation.

What the human author is saying, the *way* he is trying to say it and what is *incidental* to what he is saying

Examples:

When Matthew tells us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, his literal meaning is just that.

When Jesus tells us that he is the vine and we are the branches, he also has a Literal Sense but he does not mean he is a grape plant.

the allegorical sense

We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ;

Examples:

the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism

Manna in the desert prefiguring the Eucharist.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:14)

the moral sense

the events reported in Scripture should lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written "for our instruction".

One of the big things Jesus emphasizes is that deeds matter more than words. He tells the Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-31)

The father asks his two sons to go and work in the vineyard. One son says "yes" but doesn't go. The other son says "no" but *does* go. "Which of the two sons did his father's will?" asks Jesus in one of the easiest pop quizzes of all time.

the moral sense

Paul tells the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). In doing so, he is taking what is, in the Literal Sense, the big stone building in Jerusalem and using it to illustrate an aspect of the life of a disciple of Jesus: namely, treat your body as the dwelling place of God.

Paul is, of course, not the first person to make that connection. Jesus makes the same connection when he says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).

the anagogical sense

(Greek: anagoge, "leading").

We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland.

Examples:

Becoming heavenly is a painful process for us sinners. So the story of the Exodus—in which God must not only get Israel out of Egypt but, far more difficult, get Egypt out of Israel—mirrors the arduous journey of the soul out of bondage to sin and growth in love and virtue in the Holy Spirit that, again, culminates in Heaven.

the anagogical sense

Joseph is thrown into a pit and sold into slavery as Christ the slave was thrown into the pit of the grave. But he is raised to new life and eventually becomes the right hand man of the king just as Jesus is raised to God's right hand. Yet instead of using his power to punish his brothers, he pours out blessing on them and saves them, just as Jesus turns his sufferings to our eternal good.

All Scripture tells a single story—the story of salvation that culminates in Jesus.

The Old Testament prepares for the New, and the New Testament fulfills the Old.

The Catholic Church, under the guidance of the Spirit, has discerned which books are included in the list (or canon) of authentic Scriptures.

73 Total Books – 46 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament

Criteria to establish the books in the New Testament

1. Orthodox = teaching the truth
2. Universal = could be used throughout the Christian world
3. Liturgical = read aloud
4. Apostolic = written by a apostles or one of his immediate disciples

First list found in 382AD

Books do not become inspired because they are recognized as being canonical; rather, they are recognized as being canonical because they are inspired by God.

The Church has always seen the Scriptures as essential to nourish and govern Christian lives (CCC 131).