

14. Sacred Scripture – The Old & New Testaments

The sacred texts of Word of God offer nourishment for the soul and contains 'the sublime science of Jesus Christ'.

Key terms:

- Sacred Scripture:** The collection of holy and inspired writings officially and solemnly recognized in the Christian canon. The revelation of God put down in writing by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Testament:** Originally used by St. Paul (2Cor 2:14), “testament” [Latin – *testamentum*; Greek – *diatheke*] means a covenant, agreement, pact. It denotes the agreement or pact between God and man.
- The Bible:** A collection of sacred writings in the form of books and letters put together in two major movements: the Old and New Testaments. In its entirety the Bible holds one, unified, redemptive message: God is reconciling sinful humanity to Himself through the work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
- The Old Testament:** The original Hebrew Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish faith, written at different times between about 1200 and 165 BC, containing 46 books.
- The New Testament:** A collection of 27 books attributed to eight different authors, six of whom are numbered among the Apostles (Matthew, John, Paul, James, Peter, Jude) and two among their immediate disciples (Mark, Luke) detailing the life of Jesus Christ, the life of the early Christian community, and the future time to come.
- Torah:** Hebrew word for ‘Law’, meaning ‘guidance’ or ‘instruction’.
- Pentateuch:** First five books of the Old Testament traditionally ascribed to Moses – creation story and the laws given to us by our Creator.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew Bible has 46 books.

- The **Pentateuch** (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)
- The **Historical Books** (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther (ours is the long version), 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees)
- The **Wisdom Books** (Proverbs, Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes (Qoholeth), Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus))
- The **Major Prophets** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel)
- The **Twelve Minor Prophets** (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament has 27 books, written between about 50 and 100 AD, and falling naturally into two sections:

- The Gospels, which tell the story of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)
- The Letters (or epistles) - written by various Christian leaders to provide guidance for the earliest church communities.

EXPLORE!

Invite the candidates to share their favourite scripture passage and why! How did God speak to them through His Word?

SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

- Moto proprio '*Aperuit illis*' (30 September 2019) - annual commemoration that takes place on the third Sunday in Ordinary Time.
- Instituted to promote the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God.
- Official logo: "The Road to Emmaus"

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The readings are passages taken from both the Old and the New Testament of the Sacred Scripture:

- They call to mind, announce and, in a certain way, make present the wonders worked by God in the History of Salvation.
- Through them, God continues speaking to the men of every place and time.
- In them and through them Christ makes Himself present.
- The faith of the faithful receives nourishment from them to participate fruitfully in the offering and communion of the sacrifice of Christ.
- The community gathered together for the Eucharist receives from them a great teaching on the Christian mysteries.

First Reading

Old Testament

(Easter Time – First Reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, recalling the Church in its earliest days.

Responsorial Psalm

Sung – psalms or canticles

Second Reading

New Testament

Gospel Acclamation

"Alleluia" derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning "Praise the Lord!"

Gospel

- Proclaimed from the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – recalling the life ministry, and preaching of Christ.
- It receives several signs of honour and reverence:
 - Assembly stands to hear the Gospel
 - Book of the Gospels is incensed
 - The priest /deacon, along with the assembly makes the sign of the cross with the thumb on the forehead, mouth and breast, as they say/hear: ‘A reading from the holy Gospel according to.....’ The hearing of the Gospel must change our minds, it must be proclaimed by our lips, and it must affect our hearts [our will].
 - When the Gospel is proclaimed, the Book of the Gospels is venerated with a kiss

Additional use of Scripture in the celebration of Mass:

Entrance Antiphon

Communion Antiphon

Sacred Scripture – The Old & New Testaments — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. “The word of God is alive and active” (Heb 4 :12); it does not die, nor does it age, but it remains for ever (cf. 1 Pt 1: 25). It stays young in the presence of all that passes away (cf. Mt 25: 35) and preserves those who put it into practice from inner aging. Discuss.
2. What can we learn from the people of the Old Testament?
3. If someone asked you to explain the “good news,” what would you include in your explanation?
4. How would you understand the phrase: “Preach the gospel everywhere you go. And if necessary, use words”?
5. In the Old Testament, what are the consequences of ignoring God?
6. There are four foundational covenants that God makes with Noah (Gen. 9), Abraham (Gen 12 and 15), Moses (Ex. 19 and 24) and David (2Sam 7), before establishing the New Covenant through Jesus (Jer 31:31-34 and Luke 22:14-23).
7. What did the ancient Jews expect from their Messiah that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

PRAYER

Psalm 119 or 2Timothy 3:16-17

or

Gospel Reflection: 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A Mt. 4:12-23

Year B Mk. 1:14-20

Year C Lk.1:1-4; 4:14-21

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

Sacred Scripture – The Old & New Testaments

Scripture

Scripture

- Sir 24:30-34 God will provide an abundant outpouring of his teaching for all future generations.
- Dt. 7:18-20 The future king of the Israelites must write for himself a copy of the law of Moses (the first five books of the Old Testament) so that he might read it every day.
- Neh. 8:1-18 Ezra reads the law of Moses to the Israelites, who stand while it is being read.
- Jer. 30:1-12, 36:1-2 God commands Jeremiah to write all the words he has spoken to the prophet.
- Lk. 10:16 Those who hear the apostles, hear Christ, and those who reject them reject Christ.
- Lk. 24:13-36 The resurrected Jesus reveals himself in the Scriptures and the Eucharist.
- Lk. 24:44-48 Jesus says that everything written about him in the Law of Moses and the prophets must be fulfilled through his Paschal Mystery.
- Jn. 1:1-14 Jesus is the Word, the living Word that takes on our human nature.
- Jn. 14:15-17, 25-26 Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to be the Counsellor to be with the apostles forever, who will teach them all things.
- Jn. 21:25 Jesus said and did many things not recorded in written form.
- 1Tim 2:3-4 God wants all to be saved and to come to know the truth.
- 1Tim 6:20 Paul exhorts the bishop Timothy to guard what has been entrusted to him.
- 2Tim 3:16 Scripture is inspired by God and it is all useful for teaching, for refuting, for correction, and for training in holiness.
- 1Cor 11:2 The Corinthians maintain the traditions taught to them by Paul.
- Heb. 1:1-2 God spoke partially through the prophets, but now has spoken through his Son.
- Heb. 4:11-12 The living scriptures are able to open our hearts and lay bare our thoughts in the sight of God.
- 1Pt. 1:19-21 We possess a prophetic message that is altogether reliable; prophecy cannot be privately interpreted, because it is not human-inspired, but inspired by God.

Catechism

- 75-79 The Gospel was handed on by the apostles and their successors orally and in writing in every age, there is a living transmission we call Sacred Tradition.
- 80-83 Sacred Scripture is the speech of God, written down Sacred Tradition transmits the entirety of the Word of God entrusted to the apostles and their successors.
- 84 The apostles entrusted the Deposit of Faith to the entire Church.
- 85-86 The bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome interpret revelation; this Magisterium, in interpreting God's Word, is the servant of revelation.

- 94-95 Through the Holy Spirit, the Church continually grows in understanding the Deposit of Faith; Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium are so connected that they necessarily support one another.
- 96 The apostles handed on by preaching and writing what Christ entrusted to them.
- 101 To reveal himself to us, God condescended to speak to us in human words.
- 102, 108 Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word: Jesus Christ, and so Christianity is a religion of the Word, not of a book.
- 103 The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's body.
- 104 In Scripture, the Father lovingly meets and speaks to his children.
- 105-107 Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by human authors who wrote exactly what God wanted written for our salvation.
- 109-119 Scripture must be read and interpreted as a unity, within the Tradition of the Church, and with the understanding of faith.
- 120 The canon of Scripture was established by Tradition.
- 121-126 The Old and New Testaments form a unity focused on Jesus Christ, with the Gospels holding primacy of place since they describe Jesus' life and teachings.
- 128-130 Through typology, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is unveiled in the New.
- 131, 133 Scripture should be read and studied by the faithful.

(Source: Adapted from RCIA Catechist's Manual, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Maryland, 2007)