



Bulletin from the Diocese of Santa Rosa



Maturing in Faith: Have You Opened Your Bible Today?

October 2009

My Dear People,

One of the challenges we face as disciples of Jesus is to deepen our knowledge of our faith. So often as we grow up into adulthood, our knowledge of the faith remains on a child's level. With the secular world we live in it is necessary for each of us to have an adult faith that is able to withstand and reject the false values and the pressures of the secular society we live in. One way to a mature faith is the prayerful reading of the Scriptures. It is in prayerful reading of the Scriptures that we learn to embrace the gospel values that Jesus proclaimed.

Today's Catholic is called to take an intelligent, spiritual approach to the Bible. Here are some suggestions to help in developing an understanding approach to daily, prayerful Scripture reading.

Begin and end the reading of the bible with prayer. Reading the Bible is not like reading a novel or a history book. It should begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to the Word of God. Scripture reading should end with a prayer that this Word of God will bear fruit in our lives, helping us to become holier and more faithful disciples of Jesus.

The Bible isn't a book. It's a library. The Bible is a collection of 73 books written over the course of many centuries. The books include royal history, prophecy, poetry, challenging letters to struggling new faith communities, and believers' accounts of the preaching, life and passion of Jesus. Knowing the genre of the book you are reading will help you understand the literary tools the author is using and the meaning the author is trying to convey.

We must know what the Bible is and what it isn't. The Bible is the story of God's relationship with the people he has called to himself. It is not intended to be read as a history text, a science book, or a political manifesto. In the Bible, God teaches us the truths that we need for the sake of our salvation.

Also we must read the Bible in context, in the context of our Catholic faith. What happens before and after – even in other books – helps us to understand the true meaning of the text. A Catholic edition of the Bible with the “imprimatur” indicates the book footnotes and introductions are free of errors in Catholic doctrine.

In prayerful reading of the Scriptures, we must ask: “What is God saying to me?” The Bible is not addressed only to long-dead people in a faraway land. It is addressed to each of us in our own unique situations. We must believe that the Lord speaks to us through the words of Scripture.

To be an adult Catholic, it is important to have an adult understanding of our faith. Prayerful Scripture reading is one element to assist us in maturing our faith. I encourage all to dedicate some time each day to the prayerful reading of the Word of God.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Your Brother and Servant in the Lord,

Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh
Bishop of Santa Rosa