

What Catholics Believe About the Bible

Summary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Paragraphs 74-141)

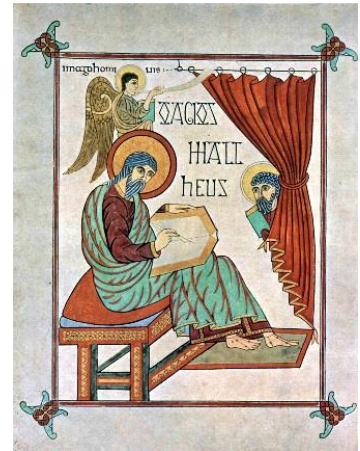
Unlike Any Other Book

The Bible is unlike any other book in human history for three reasons:

1. **Source**—we believe that the Bible is the actual word of God—other books may be inspirational, but the Bible is *inspired*
2. **Purpose**—the Bible is an authoritative guide to God’s plan of salvation
3. **Function**—the Bible allows us to encounter God—as individuals and as the Family of God, the Church

What is the Bible?

- The Bible is **God’s word put down in human speech under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit** (CCC, #81)
- In the Bible, “the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them” (CCC #104)
- The Bible is called “Sacred Scripture” or the “Sacred Books” to indicate its origin in God



What is in the Bible?

- The word “Bible” literally means “**library**”
- The Bible is a collection of **73 books**—these books were written by various authors from many different places over a period of about 1,300 years (from about 1200 B.C. to 100 A.D.)
- The Bible was **originally written in Hebrew and Greek**—and some parts were passed down through oral tradition for generations before they were written down



- The Bible is organized into 2 parts
 1. **OLD TESTAMENT** (46 books)—tells the story of God’s covenant before the coming of Jesus
 2. **NEW TESTAMENT** (27 books)—tells the story of Jesus and the Church He founded

Books of the Bible

	Law	History	Wisdom	Prophecy
Old Testament	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles Ezra & Nehemiah Tobit Judith Esther 1 & 2 Maccabees	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Wisdom Sirach	Isaiah Jeremiah & Lamentations Baruch Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel & Amos Obadiah & Jonah Micah & Nahum Habakkuk & Zephaniah Haggai & Zechariah Malachi
New Testament	Matthew Mark Luke John	Acts of the Apostles	Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Timothy Titus & Philemon Hebrews James 1 & 2 Peter 1, 2, & 3 John Jude	Revelation

- The books in the Bible are arranged into **chapters and verses** to make locating a passage easier, but chapters and verses are not part of the original texts
- The books in the Bible use a **wide variety of writing styles**, including: history, letters, poetry, songs and prayers, parables, genealogies, rules, inventories/lists, and visions
- The books were sometimes written by the stated author, other times they were written by scribes who listened to the author dictate to them, and other times they were written by disciples of the authors who had collected and preserved the teachings of the author

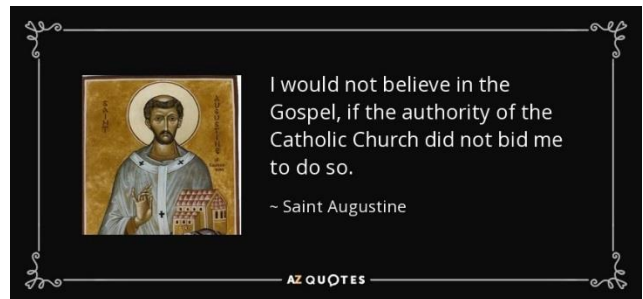


Is the Bible true?

- Yes, the Bible is God’s Revelation: **God reveals himself to us** through Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and Sacred Tradition which make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God (CCC #97)
- The Bible is the **inspired Word of God**—it *faithfully, firmly and without error teaches that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wants us to know*. (CCC #107)
- The Bible is the **work of human authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit**—these human authors used their talents, style and intelligence; they also reflect their own human abilities and weaknesses, and the culture and historical period in which they lived.

Who preserved and collected the books?

- Bishops examined letters and writings of the early Church and determined which were authentic and could be proclaimed at Mass—these lists of the “canon” (accepted texts) of the New Testament were compiled and organized by Bishops, Popes and Ecumenical Councils
- The Old Testament writings were preserved within the Jewish communities. The New Testament authors and the early Church used the Greek Old Testament text called “The Septuagint” and these writings were included in our canon of Sacred Scripture
- The Canon of Scripture was in place by the end of the 300’s—and affirmed by multiple councils including the Council of Trent in 1545



Was the Bible copied accurately?

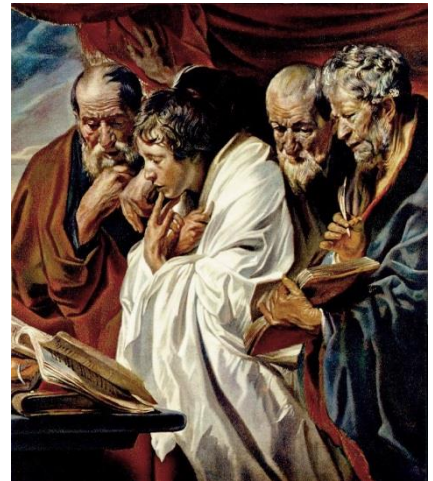
- Yes, content analysis of the thousands of ancient manuscripts of the Bible (both Old and New Testament, copies from all over the world) show a greater accuracy (over 95% agreement!) than do multiple copies of Shakespeare’s manuscripts (from only 500 years ago)!
- For example, a copy of the scroll of Isaiah was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls cave—when it was translated, it was in almost perfect agreement with the translation of Isaiah used by the Catholic Church.

- Current Scripture scholarship makes use of many tools and resources to refine translations of the ancient texts to accurately reflect the meaning of words in their historical time period. Revisions of accepted translations occur regularly—and, after rigorous review, are accepted within the Catholic Church.



How do we interpret the Bible?

- We believe the inspired books of the Bible teach the truth; still, the Christian faith is not a ‘religion of the book.’ **Christianity is the religion of the Word of God, Jesus Christ.** We read the Bible through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus—the one single Word of God—may open our minds to the Scriptures. An essential part of reading the Bible is **prayer**—in conversation with the God who speaks to us in His Word.
- In Sacred Scripture, **God speaks to us in a human way.** To interpret Sacred Scripture correctly, we must pay attention to the human words used by the author AND to what God wants to tell us through those human words.
- **We read the Bible *literarily*, not literally.** The reader of the Bible must consider the tools and methods used by the human author to convey God’s truth. God’s truth is differently presented in different styles of writing and the truth of Scripture is not dependent upon the scientific, historical or cultural accuracy of the text. Some styles of writing are not intended to be taken literally—yet they still convey the truth God wishes to teach us (for example, the stories Jesus told in the Gospels)
- When interpreting moral laws, we must recognize that sometimes **the Bible contains instructions that are imperfect or provisional**—in the interest of carrying out His plan with His people, God sometimes allowed violations of moral laws to persist until more foundational lessons were learned (i.e. allowing husbands to have multiple wives, acknowledging and ‘living with’ slavery). This is where Sacred Tradition can help us interpret and apply moral laws.
- The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form in the Bible or preserved in Sacred Tradition, has been entrusted to the teaching office of the Church—called the **Magisterium**. This Magisterium (usually expressed in a formal statement by the pope or a council) is not superior to the Word of God, but its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. (CCC #86)



*“Study the Scriptures with thorough and creative imagination.
Let them be the air you breathe, the light of your soul.”*

Archbishop Edwin O’Brien, 1/16/2011

How does the Catholic Church use the Bible?

- **Our Mass is filled with Sacred Scripture.** A vast majority of the responses and words in Mass are direct quotes from or allusions to the Bible. In addition, we hear four passages of the Bible proclaimed at every Mass: a First Reading (usually from the Old Testament), a Psalm, a Second Reading (usually from one of the New Testament letters) and a Gospel reading (from one of the four Gospels).
- The readings at Mass are found in the **Lectionary**—which organizes the Bible into 3 cycles of Sunday Readings (years A, B, and C) and 2 cycles of Daily Mass readings (years I and II). If you attend Mass (daily and Sunday), you would hear almost the entire Bible proclaimed every 3 years.
- The **celebration of all 7 Sacraments** uses direct quotes and allusions to Sacred Scripture.
- The Church also uses Sacred Scripture as the **foundation of her daily prayer**, called the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy of the Hours, and especially morning and evening prayer, is organized around a 4-week cycle of the Psalms and short Scripture passages. Most other forms of Liturgical prayer include passages from the Bible.
- The Church makes use of Sacred Scripture in **explaining and interpreting doctrinal and moral matters**. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and other formal statements of our faith (including letters from the pope) are filled with references to the Bible. None of the doctrine defined by the Catholic Church contradicts Sacred Scripture, even if that doctrine is not explicitly stated in the Bible.



How can individuals use the Scriptures?

The Catholic Church **encourages all the faithful to read the Bible**:

*“And such is the **force and power of the Word of God** that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor and the children of the Church as **strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life**. Hence, access to Sacred Scripture ought to be **open wide to the Christian faithful**. ... The Church **forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful** to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ by **frequent reading of the divine Scriptures**. ‘Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’” (CCC #131-133)*

- **Read from a Catholic translation of the Bible**—the two recommended by most Scripture scholars are the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition and the New American Bible, Revised Edition (the NAB is the translation used at Mass in the United States)
- **Read the Bible along with the liturgical cycle of the Church**, focusing on reading and praying the Gospels. There are many resources to help you with reflections and guidance about how to interpret the passages, including: Word Among Us, Magnificat, Word on Fire, St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, and the US Bishop’s website. Use a reflection journal to record your prayers, insights and questions.
- **Memorize Scripture passages.** Focus on passages that help you praise and worship God throughout the day and/or that help you build up the virtues you want to work on. Write down passages and place them throughout your home or office. Listen to music that puts Scripture passages to melodies: it is a great way to memorize Scripture.
- Set aside time to **study the Scriptures in a systematic and serious way**—but in manageable ‘chunks.’ Suggested resources include the Bible in a Year podcast from Ascension Press and the writings of Bergsma, Pitre, Hahn, Sri, Cavins or Healy, or some other study materials (also search on FORMED.org)
- Develop the habit of **applying Scripture to your daily decisions**—become familiar enough with the Scriptures that you can call upon them to help guide the decisions you make throughout the day to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ; sharing the Biblical reason for your choices is an effective means of evangelization as well
- **Incorporate more Scripture into your prayer time.** Using Scripture is the surest way to keep your conversation with God in prayer from turning into a monologue where you do all the talking! God speaks to you through His Word! It can be very helpful to use a method of imaginative prayer and meditation with the Bible, rooted in the ancient prayer of Lectio Divina (prayer with the “Sacred Word”):

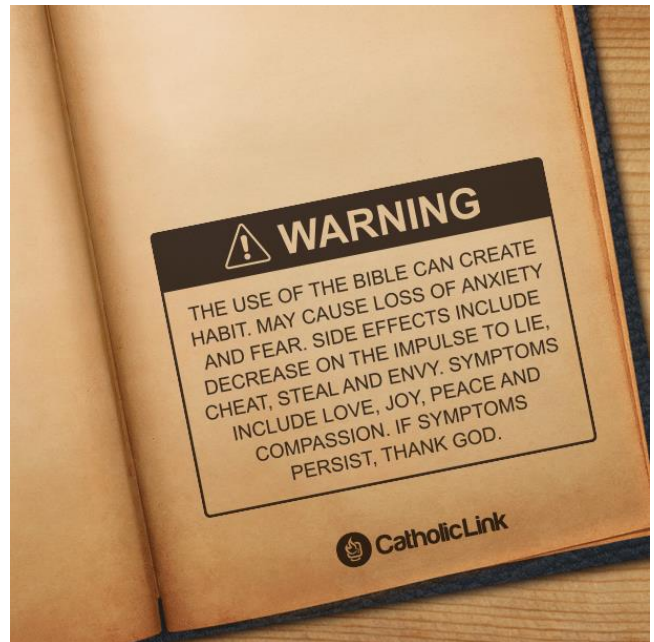


Choose a short Gospel passage/story and read it slowly three times. Each time focus on deepening your reflections: first, observe the story and know it; second, reflect on its spiritual meaning and main point; third, listen to the message God is giving you through His word. Finally, resolve to act on God’s word in the circumstances of your daily life.

How much should we care about the Bible?

“You who are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries know, when you receive the body of the Lord, how you protect it with all caution and veneration lest any small part fall from it, lest anything of the consecrated gift be lost. For you believe, and correctly, that you are answerable if anything falls from there by neglect. But if you are so careful to preserve His body, and rightly so, **how do you think that there is less guilt to have neglected God’s word than to have neglected His body?**”

Origen, 3rd century



THE CATHOLIC BIBLE'S BOOKS



OLD TESTAMENT

1 Gn GENESIS 50	2 Ex EXODUS 40	3 Lv LEVITICUS 27	4 Nm NUMBERS 36	5 Dt DEUTERONOMY 34			6 Jos JOSHUA 24	7 Jc JUDGES 21	8 Rt RUTH 4	9 1 Sm 1 SAMUEL 31	10 2 Sm 2 SAMUEL 24
11 1 Ki 1 KINGS 22	12 2 Ki 2 KINGS 25	13 1 Ch 1 CHRONICLES 29	14 2 Ch 2 CHRONICLES 36	15 Ez EZRA 10	16 Ne NEHEMIAH 13	17 Tb TOBIT 14	18 Jdt JUDITH 16	19 Es ESTHER 16	20 1 Mac 1 MACCABEES 16	21 2 Mac 2 MACCABEES 15	22 Jb JOB 42
23 Ps PSALMS 150	24 Pr PROVERBS 31	25 Ec ECCLESIASTES 12	26 So SONG OF SOLOMON 8	27 Wis WISDOM 19	28 Sir SIRACH 51	29 Is ISAIAH 66	30 Je JEREMIAH 52	31 Lm LAMENTATIONS 5	32 Ba BARUCH 6	33 Ek EZEKIEL 48	34 Dn DANIEL 14
35 Ho HOSEA 14	36 Jl JOEL 4	37 Am AMOS 9	38 Ob OBADIAH 1	39 Jh JONAH 4	40 Mi MICAH 7	41 Na NAHUM 3	42 Hk HABAKKUK 3	43 Zp ZEPHANIAH 3	44 Ha HAGGAI 2	45 Zc ZECHARIAH 14	46 Mal MALACHI 3

INFO "Bible" comes from the greek βιβλία ("The books").
The Catholic Bible contains **73 books**: 46 from the
Old Testament and 27 from the New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT

52 Ro ROMANS 16	53 1 Co 1 CORINTHIANS 16	54 2 Co 2 CORINTHIANS 13	55 Ga GALATIANS 6	56 Ep EPHESIANS 6	57 Pp PHILIPPIANS 4	58 Cl COLOSSIANS 4	59 1 Th 1 THESSALONIANS 5	60 2 Th 2 THESSALONIANS 3	61 1 Ti 1 TIMOTHY 6	62 2 Ti 2 TIMOTHY 4	63 Tt TITUS 3
64 Pm PHILEMON 1	65 Hb HEBREWS 13	66 Ja JAMES 5	67 1 Pe 1 PETER 5	68 2 Pe 2 PETER 3	69 1 Jn 1 JOHN 5	70 2 Jn 2 JOHN 1	71 3 Jn 3 JOHN 1	72 Ju JUDE 1	73 Re REVELATION 22		

PAULINE LETTERS

GENERAL LETTERS

REVELATIONS

PENTATEUCH

HISTORICAL

SAPIENTIAL

MAJOR PROPHETS

MINOR PROPHETS

GOSPELS

Number
Symbol
NAME
Chapters



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HOW DO YOU PRAY THE LECTIO DIVINA?

Lectio Divina is a practice of **scriptural reading**. It involves meditating on a passage of the Bible, preferably the **Gospel of the day**.

Steps to pray:



1. INVOKE

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide the reading of the Scripture.



2. READ

Ask yourself: What is this passage saying? If you can, use a Bible commentary.



3. MEDITATE

In a moment of silence, try to listen to the voice of God.



4. PRAY

Begin to dialogue with the Lord and open yourself to his will.



5. CONTEMPLATE

Listen closely with your heart and put into practice what he has told you.



How to pray? 10 ways of praying



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DON'T SAY
GOD
IS SILENT
WHEN YOUR
BIBLE
IS CLOSED



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