

Making the decision to live the word of God

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In some quarters, Catholics have been given a negative stereotype about our knowledge of sacred Scripture. This stereotype does have some truth to it because most Catholics do not know a great deal about the latest biblical scholarship and we may not know where to find a biblical passage, though it may sound familiar. Yet, this lack of knowledge is not a good reason to continue in our ignorance, but rather, it can be viewed as a challenge. We can resolve to do something about changing the stereotype — just as Bishop Gregory Aymond challenged us in last month's Bishop's Interview. As we celebrate The Year of the Living Word in our diocese, I offer a few insights and practical guides into living out the word of God in our daily lives.

Before we approach sacred Scripture, we must realize that the word of God is a who, not a what. The word of God is Jesus, the fullness of all God the father wanted to reveal to the world about the nature of God and the eternal plan for all of creation. This revelation about God and the plan of salvation was revealed through Christ, given to the church in both an oral (sacred tradition) and a written (sacred Scripture) form. So, when we approach sacred Scripture, we must always remember that we are coming into contact with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This encounter should affect how we read, study and pray with the Bible. It is not just another book. It is an encounter with Christ, as the

Vatican II document on sacred Scripture says, "The Church has always

one another, but rather they are intertwined and this reflects how we should

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venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body." (Dei Verbum 21).

Receiving both God's word and body strengthens us to live in a right relationship with him, and this is what Catholicism is about — living in a relationship with Jesus — not just an intellectual pursuit.

This means we must read the Bible with the purpose of growing in relationship, not only because we want to learn more. Of course, knowledge of Scripture and a relationship with Christ are not opposed to

approach any study and application of the Bible.

Practically speaking, living the word of God in our daily lives is a serious challenge and we should not take it lightly. It will mean that each of us will be called to constant conversion, that is, we will be called to become more like Christ. Because of the high calling we receive, we should start with small changes to our habits.

There are growing numbers of

Catholics who read and study the Mass readings the week before attending church on Sundays. This is a great way to make the Mass more meaningful and applicable. When we

have time to reflect on the Scriptures before hearing them pro-

claimed, they take on new life.

Another change we can make is to start reading the Bible daily. Those who already do this can maybe pray with the Bible a little longer each day. Start by reading Scripture for five or 10 minutes every day. If necessary, schedule the time. This can be a life-changing encounter. Length of time is not important, but rather depth of prayer is. As Bishop Aymond suggested last month, use a good commentary to help you.

Our next step should be to apply the principles of the Bible to our daily lives. The Bible's moral code shows us how to be Christians. When our lives reflect the teachings of the Bible, they will be lives full of mercy, justice, peace, charity, stewardship, chastity, faith, hope, etc. In turn, our lives will lead others to the word of God.

This leads me to my last suggestion, seek others to walk with you. It is difficult to make a resolution and stick to it without being held accountable by someone. Whether it is studying and praying with a family member, a friend or a group from your parish, seek out others who you can help and who can help you.

May each of us use 2008 as the opportunity to dive deeper into sacred Scripture and in doing so encounter the creator of the universe. May his word help us as we choose to live out God's word every day.

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