

Reading the Bible from the Heart of the Church

Word of God Sunday 2022 Message

Sarah was studying in the university when she started reading the Bible seriously for the first time after having a personal encounter with God. As she opened the pages of the Bible, somehow, she knew that she was connecting with God in the Church. Despite limited proficiency in interpreting the Bible, she was not lost because she did not read the Bible in isolation, but within the communion of the Church: what she learned from weekly homilies, catechism classes, Christian hymns, Bible study, faith formation, fellow Catholics and Christian friends came together to help her understand what she reads in the Bible, though of course some passages remain difficult to understand.

With the advent of social media, however, she has been exposed to a much wider sources of information, many of which conflict with what she has believed since her younger years. Initially, she encountered conflicting arguments coming from non-Catholic or even anti-Catholic sources. These only spurred her to learn even more about her Catholic faith so that she could give a reasonable explanation of her faith (cf. 1Peter 3:15). More recently, however, and with increasing frequency, she has been hearing conflicting arguments from within the Church, even from among Church authorities. They ask things like, “Did Jesus really say that?”. Some even question whether the Bible’s teaching is correct on current hot-button issues. It seems many people no longer believe that the Bible is the written word of God with God’s authority behind it.

Luckily, some of Sarah’s friends help her to read the Bible from the heart of the Church. That means three things: 1) reading the Bible with reverence and trust, not with suspicion; 2) interpreting what we read the Bible according to the time-tested understanding of the Church’s Sacred Tradition as expressed in the Liturgy, the Church Fathers, the Doctors of the Church and the Saints, and distilled in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC); and 3) learning from the Bible as disciples of Jesus Christ, sincerely trying to learn from the Master.

Ultimately, reading the Bible is supposed to help us encounter Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. Such an encounter can be likened to a thirsty person who finds an abundant spring of water¹. Every time one is thirsty, one can drink as much as one can take in, but there is plenty of water that remains; and this is a good thing for which one should be grateful. If the spring were depleted, there would be no more water to quench subsequent thirst.

¹ Cf. Commentary on the *Diatessaron* (a document that attempts to harmonise the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)) by Saint Ephrem, deacon (cf. Liturgy of the Hours, Office of Readings, Ordinary Time Week 6 Sunday).