

Bible Study Method 2

After a brief interruption by the Solemnity of All Saints last week, we draw to a close this month our *Link* series on the Word of God. Let us look at another method of sharing on the Scriptures as a family or in small groups. But first an anecdote from this writer.

During a Redemptorist meeting in Brazil, I was taken by my confrere, Fr Marcio, to a small Christian community in one of the poverty-stricken favelas of São Paulo. The Liturgy of the Word was followed by a faith-sharing among about 25 people gathered. I didn't understand a word of Portuguese, but the discussion was lively and animated, the topic from the day's Gospel being "what does 'turning the other cheek' mean in our context?"

On the way back to the monastery, Marcio told me that sometime back he had also taken his Scripture professor from Rome to this small Christian community. The priest was silent in the car and Marcio awkwardly asked him if he was upset by the people's simplistic interpretation of the day's text. The professor replied: "Not at all. I've spent my life studying the Scriptures. I am fluent in all biblical languages. I've read every commentary in the library and I've published my own. But today, for the first time in my life, I experienced the Bible as a *living word*."

What an admission! Living word? Yes, the word of God is "alive and active; it can judge secret emotions and thoughts..." (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is not a museum piece. God's word becomes incarnate in people in every age of history.

The Bible study method we want to look at today is not really a "study" at all. It takes its cue from Hebrews that the Word is alive. It is similar to the Lectio Divina presented two weeks ago, but this time it encourages participants to be as personal as possible. It is a sharing of *faith*, not an academic study.

This requires a level of trust and humility in the group.

1. Someone reads the text. Allow a moment's silence.
2. Another person reads the text again.
3. Each participant repeats out loud a word, phrase or verse that struck them – without comment.
4. Now for the hard part! When everyone has had a turn to repeat their word(s) from the text, they share

on the following compound question based on Hebrews above:

What emotion does today's Scripture evoke in *me*? Why? What thoughts does it bring to the fore? How does it challenge me to think differently; to behave differently? [Only use "I..." – No preaching! No "we..."]

Recall how Jesus in John 15:3 says to his disciples that they have been "pruned and purified" by means of the Word which they had welcomed into their lives by following Jesus. Indeed, if the Word of God is a two-edged sword, then it can cut to the heart. It pares away our self-delusions and self-righteousness. It prunes our dead branches. It prepares us to bear more abundant fruit.

Faith-sharing as a family or as small communities can be far more difficult than listening to a sermon. But then again, it can also be more rewarding.



SUNDAY MASS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

Let my prayer come into your presence. Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

FIRST READING: Wisdom 6:12-16.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 63.

RESPONSE:

For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.

1. O God, you are my God; at dawn I seek you; for you my soul is thirsting. For you my flesh is pining, like a dry, weary land without water. **R**
2. I have come before you in the sanctuary, to behold your strength and your glory. Your loving mercy is better than life; my lips will speak your praise. **R**
3. I will bless you all my life; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul shall be filled as with a banquet; with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you. **R**
4. When I remember you upon my bed, I muse on you through the watches of the night. For you have been my strength; in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. **R**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! Watch, therefore, and be ready; the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:1-13.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose, near restful waters he leads me.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 9 Nov DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA Ezekiel 47:1-2.8-9.12; Psalm 46; John 2: 13-22

Whatever our sins may be, let us never underestimate the possible harmful effects they may have on others and ourselves. Each day we ought to strive to live virtuously and to "shine like lights in the world" for others.

Tue 10 Nov St Leo the Great, PD

Titus 2:1-8.11-14; Psalm 37; Luke 17:7-10
When life pulls the rug from under our feet we feel helpless and hopeless. But this is exactly where we can feel God's power and presence – gently guiding, directing, healing and transforming.

Wed 11 Nov St Martin of Tours, B

Titus 3:1-7; Psalm 23; Luke 17:11-19
The almost necessary fault-line through all of life – and its potential to heal and transform – is aptly summed up in a line from Leonard Cohen's poem *Anthem* – "there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."

Thu 12 Nov St Josaphat, BM

Philemon 7-20; Psalm 146; Luke 17:20-25
Each day we seek the face of God in our lives, and each day we re-learn that we are not there yet. We fall and get up, fall and get up... and in this process we experience the mercy of our loving God.

Fri 13 Nov Liturgy of the Day

2 John 4-9; Psalm 119; Luke 17:26-37
God's Word teaches us that temptations in life often come to us disguised as our own needs. These can distract us, if we let them, from what really matters. Jesus teaches us to focus on the needs of others.

Sat 14 Nov Liturgy of the Day

3 John 5-8; Psalm 112; Luke 18:1-8
Our suffering has the potential to break us open, to enlarge our capacity to recognize and relieve the suffering of others, or it can leave us bitter and angry. Allow the light of God's grace...

Sun 15 Nov 33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prov. 31:10-13.19-20.30-31; Psalm 128; Matt. 25:14-30
Do not be deceived by Christian charlatans! The truth of Jesus' message has nothing to do with money or sowing of fear. It has to do with love and mercy and compassion and a deep commitment to the poor.

(KEY: **SOLEMNITY**; **FEAST**; **Memorial**; (Optional **Memorial**)
P=Pope; D=Doctor; B=Bishop; M=Martyr

In these weeks leading up to Christmas, the Church asks us to reflect and repent as we wait in joyful hope for our Savior to arrive. Featuring Advent-themed devotions written by the authors of the popular Living Faith Daily Catholic Devotions magazine, Living Faith Advent serves as a daily aid, an oasis from the commercialism and busyness of the season. In addition to preparing gifts for others, give yourself the gift of being better able to welcome our newborn Saviour on Christmas Day.



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