

## Bibles and Commentaries

### BIBLE READING FROM A CATECHISM

**THE Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition** (CFCDE) can be used for **Bible reading** because it is chock-a-block with Bible texts, and the rest of the catechism is a **commentary** on them.

Each of its carefully crafted 50 Questions-&-Answers has its own (or several) carefully chosen Bible text:

- **partly proof**
- **partly piety**
- **partly persuasion**
- **partly explanation.**

While its 50 Q&As average 25 words per answer (not counting Creed, Commandments, *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*), it has far more words in its Bible texts.

Its Bible translation is usually *Douay-Rheims*. Disputed texts were settled with the Church's official Latin Bible, the *New Vulgate*, (1979/1986). Thus the modern translation of Ephesians 3:15, "every family on earth takes its name from God..." was rejected, in favour of Douay-Rheims and the new Latin, "God, from Whom all fatherhood on earth is named".

The CFCDE deliberately quotes most Bible texts which Protestants think Catholics ignore or find embarrassing. It is ecumenical in the right way.

The CFCDE is \$5, with discounts for quantity.

### CHOICE OF TRANSLATION

**IN THIS CONTEXT** of the CFCDE and Bible reading, here is guidance on **translations** and **commentaries**.

A Catholic translation of the Bible must be:

- approved by the Catholic Church with *Imprimatur*;
  - equipped with explanatory notes (canon 825)
- include the books of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) and Maccabees, etc., which are omitted in a Protestant Old Testament.

A translation should be:

- readable;
- convey "the sense of the sacred"; the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE) uses Thou, Thee, Thy and Thine for God; the Douay Rheims uses them also for people - which conveys the meaning more accurately, eg. comparing Matthew 16:19 with 18:18; and distinguishing St Peter from the other apostles in Luke 22:31-32.

In defence of "old-fashioned language", we might heed the authoritative words of Rome's *Authentic Liturgy* §27 (7th May, 2001), which stated that authentic translations of the liturgy "should be free of an overly servile adherence to prevailing modes of expression. If indeed, in the liturgical texts, words or expressions are sometimes employed which differ somewhat from usual and everyday speech, it is often enough by virtue of this very fact that the texts become truly memorable and capably of expressing heavenly realities... contribute to the gradual development of a **sacred style** that will come to be recognized as proper to liturgical language. Thus it will happen that a certain manner of speech which has come to be considered somewhat obsolete in daily usage may continue to be maintained in the liturgical context."

### CHECK-UP VERSES

These verses typify entire translations: Does your Bible preserve the traditional Catholic words? Or substitute bland and secular words? Has it surrendered to the feminist *newspeak* "inclusive language"?

**Psalm 1:1:** A good translation does not desacralize "blessed" as "happy". This rules out the Grail Psalms (often called Gelineau) used in the Breviary and in the responsorial psalms and antiphons at Mass. And *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB), also used at Mass, reduces "blessed" to "happy" in the Beatitudes, (Matthew 5:2ff).

**Luke 1:27:** "grace" should not be reduced to "highly favoured the way JB does. Thirty five years ago, trendy religious education eliminated "grace" and "sanctifying grace", though "grace" was briefly revived by singing *Amazing Grace*, a Protestant hymn, whose tune had a soulful swing. For many, "grace" is now only a prayer before and after meals.

**Ephesians 1:1:** A good Bible translation does not desacralize "saints" as "people of God" the way the Good News Bible does (i.e. Today's English Version). "Holy Ones" is quite acceptable in earlier editions of the *New American Bible* (which falls down elsewhere).

**Matthew 16: 24:** A good translation does not bend the knee to the feminist philosophy and its unisex interchangeability by eliminating "man" and "he" as generics. Similarly in Psalm 1:1, a good translation does not pluralize "man" to "they" the way the Lectionary at Mass does, and also the *New Revised Standard Version*. (N.B. Beware of getting kindred names mixed up: RSV, RSVCE, and NRSV.)

### RECOMMENDED by Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc. (CNFRI)

A modern but "traditional" translation is the **REVISED STANDARD VERSION Catholic Edition** (RSVCE). It might yet replace the JB for the readings at Mass.

**Ignatius Press** offers a soft cover RSVCE in a cheapish edition with cross-references, sketchy notes, and very tight margins, **\$36**.

There is an even cheaper version, a **Protestant RSV**, which, of course, lacks some of the OT books. Nevertheless, it has helpful subheadings and 500 line drawings/maps on history/geography/culture. CNFRI supplies a page of Catholic alterations to bring it into accord with the RSVCE. Hardcover, **\$18.75**.

**My Daily Catholic Bible** sets out the *entire* Bible as 20 minutes devotional readings, with an OT and a NT passage for each of the 365 days a year, headed by a quote from a saint. CNFRI supplies an index. Excellent value for piety. Paperback **\$45**.

**Scepter Press** (*Opus Dei*) has a leather cover with easy opening, excellent central margins, index, cross-references, sketchy notes, but no subheadings. **\$91**. There is also a smaller print, bonded, leather-covered edition for **\$51**.

**Navarre Bible** (*Opus Dei*) has its New Testament books as separate paperback volumes, with Latin and **extensive commentary** (much more than half each page), **\$357**. Individual New Testament (NT) books in paperback range

up to \$31; some are combined, so that 12 volumes span the 27 books of the NT. In hardcover, the Gospels with Acts is \$86.50. Much of the Old Testament is now available, also with Latin and commentary, with similar pricing to the New Testament for the paperbacks of individual books, or hardcovers for groups of books.

The **DOUAY-RHEIMS** translation is to English-speaking Catholics what the *King James Bible* ("Authorised Version") is to Protestants. It is named after the two towns in northern France where Catholic scholars from England went "off-shore", not to avoid taxation but to avoid being hung, drawn and quartered.

**Douay-Rheims Bible** quality bound in hardcover and easy-opening without subheadings but with good margins, basic cross-references, synopsis of each chapter, and very brief notes: \$75.

**The Holy Catholic Bible** edited by Father George Haydock dating from 1850, with separate A4-volumes for Old and New Testaments (not sold separately, and one inch and two inches thick, respectively) in vinyl covers, \$170. There is an **extensive commentary** (in more words than the Bible text itself) in small print and on the same page as the text; it quotes extensively from the ancient fathers of the Church like St Jerome, St Augustine and St John Chrysostom, and medieval theologians like St Thomas Aquinas, and more modern commentators like Bossuet and St Alphonsus, plus some Protestant comment, too. It is amazing how much of it anticipates modern commentary. Most of the cross-references are in the commentary.

The illustrations intermingled with the Bible text are quaint by modern standards, with their own charm.

The slimmer volume containing the New Testament also includes "An Historical and Chronological Index to the New Testament", a "Useful Table of References" directing the reader to the Bible verses and accompanying footnotes with "Catholic truths here deduced out of the Holy Scriptures"; "An Illustrated and Comprehensive Bible Dictionary" (glossary); A Comprehensive History of the Books of the Holy Catholic Bible" also artistically illustrated, with a variety of old woodcut pictures.

The hardcover binding in one volume is \$220.

## OTHER BIBLES

Over the years, the *Good News Bible*, i.e. *Today's English Version*, has become even blander and less accurate, indeed, more of a paraphrase, including its Catholic editions. Its strengths are in the subheadings and simple drawings, and these are useful even while reading from other versions.

## OTHER COMMENTARIES

Finding a really helpful Bible commentary has always been a problem. Like Murphy's Law, something always goes wrong, and your commentary lacks answers on the only things you are looking for.

Apart from those mentioned above, commentaries mostly are separate from the Bible text. Such is *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 1953/57, which older priests have in their libraries. It has lots of useful material which complements the Navarre Bible's and Haydock's commentaries.

The full edition of *The Jerusalem Bible* 1966 has briefer notes than these, plus lots of cross-references.

*The Jerome Biblical Commentary* of 1969/1972 abets the demythologizers and is not recommended.

## COMPUTERIZED BIBLES

Computerized Bibles are highly recommended for family catechetics and homeschoolers. They are a more powerful tool for finding texts than a book concordance. The latest computerized versions search a dozen translations at once. Even the earlier ones will do fancy searches, including 'both-and' or 'either-or'. And then you can print out the texts or passages you want.

However, most computerized Bibles are Protestant, hence you buy them at Protestant shops, such as the Bible Society. Their modern translations tend to suffer the same defects as modern Catholic translations.

Being Protestant, they lack Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) and the Maccabees etc (what Protestants call the Apocrypha and we call the Deutero-canonical books). However, there is a programme called *The Word Processor* which has the Protestant edition of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) joined on to their "apocrypha".

*Douay-Rheims* on computer is available from John XXIII Co-op, but its hypertext is poor.

## RECITING THE PSALMS

In the Grail translation of the Psalms (akin to the French Gelineau), that vital Catholic words "adore" and "adoration" are reduced to "worship", or weakened to "bow down", so it only occurs in Psalms 29 [28], 86 [85] and 138 [137], out of the 19 occurrences in the Church's official Latin Bible, the New Vulgate.

Its gravest omission is in "the invitatory psalm" for the start of the daily office, Psalm 95 [94]: "Come in, let us bow and bend low; let us kneel before the God who made us for he is our God and we are the people who belong to his pasture, the flock that is led by his hand;" (40 words).

However, the *Novus Ordo* Latin Breviary has *Venite, adoremus et procidamus, et genua flectamus ante Dominum qui fecit nos, quia ipse est Deus noster, et nos populus pascuae eius et oves manus eius*.

This should guide the translation from the Hebrew to be, "Come, **let us adore** and fall down, and bend the knee before the LORD [i.e. Yahweh, of Exodus 3:14] Who made us, because He is our God, and we the people of His pasture and the sheep of his hand; (35 words).

For many Catholics, "adore" is only at Christmas in the carol, "O come, all ye faithful". Yet the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) preserves it in its technical sense as the supreme homage given to God because He made us from nothing. See its index.

One "modern" young man started reading the Psalms in the *Douay-Rheims* version and immediately pronounced them "prayable". And an Anglican professor of English was asked to rewrite the Psalms in "inclusive language"; reluctantly, he agreed to do so, saying, "But it won't sound like God said it."

## PURCHASING

The above Bibles and many more are available from CNFRI, details below. Please call or make enquiries.