

Saints *Alive!*

Issue
15

The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Spending more time meditating on Scripture is something we can do whether we are 7 or 70.

Knowing and Living the Scriptures

By Rich Cleveland

Gary and Judy and their family, Catholics since 2003, were visiting at a Protestant church picnic where Gary's father also happened to be the pastor. Their five-year-old son Brandon quickly left to play with another boy about his own age. After awhile Gary went to see how Brandon was doing and to meet the little boy with whom he was playing.

"Brandon, who's your friend?" Gary asked. And like most boys that age, Brandon hadn't bothered to ask his little friend his name. So Gary turned to the boy and asked, "What's your name?"

"Noah" the boy replied.

"That's a great name!" Gary said. "Do you know anybody in the Bible named Noah?" Noah indicated he didn't and simply stared at Gary blankly probably wondering what this man was babbling about. But then Brandon spoke up and explained, "Noah is the one who built the ark." Then turning to his new friend, Noah, he said matter-of-factly, "I'm Catholic. That's why I know the Bible so well."

Wow! Wouldn't it be wonderful if Brandon represented the wave of the future—Catholics who know their Bible and who would unassumingly share it with others?

Perhaps there is no better time than this Jubilee Year of St. Paul to refocus on what the Church has always taught: the importance of knowing and living the Scriptures. This seems to be the intent of Pope Benedict XVI on June 28, 2008, when he spoke at the *Opening of the Pauline Year*: "For us Paul is not [just] a figure of the past whom we remember with veneration. He is also our teacher, an Apostle and herald of Jesus Christ for us too. . . . Thus we are not gathered to reflect on past history, irrevocably behind us. Paul wants to speak to us—today. That is why

I chose to establish this special 'Pauline Year': in order to listen to him and learn today from him, as our teacher, 'the faith and the truth' in which the reasons for unity among Christ's disciples are rooted."¹

There are many topics about which St. Paul may speak to us today if we will but listen. One is the message he delivered to the leaders at Ephesus: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Paul, knowing that it was unlikely that he would ever see the church of Ephesus again, directed their attention and future well-being to sacred Scripture that he knew was capable of bringing them to maturity in Christ and enabling them to experience the fullness of sanctification. Writing to Timothy, who was bishop of Ephesus, he continued this emphasis by saying that, "All **scripture** is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

This essential importance of Scripture to bring about the transformation of our heart, mind, and behavior was confirmed by Vatican II, "the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life."²

Though Billy Graham became known for punctuating his talks with "the Bible says," St. Paul was ahead of him by 2,000 years when he reinforced his writings with such expressions as; "The **scripture** says" (Romans 10:11); "But what does the **scripture** say?" (Galatians 4:30); and "Do you not know what the **scripture** says?" (Romans 11:2).

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Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Emmaus Journey's goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the nonreligious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



Saints Alive! is published by Emmaus Journey, a national Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry of The Navigators. Copyright © 2008 Emmaus Journey. Please feel free to get in touch with us:

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Multiple copies of *Saints Alive!* are available upon request.

From the Heart

By Rich Cleveland

Helping people know Jesus through knowing sacred Scripture is the focus of Emmaus Journey and has included writing many bible study resources in the last 13 years. One might ask why helping others to learn and meditate on sacred Scripture has become such an essential ingredient of our lives and of Emmaus Journey ministries. Three life-changing experiences have influenced the direction of our ministry and validated the importance of helping people know the Bible.

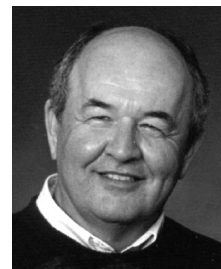
At age 20, while serving in the Air Force in Germany, I began reading the Bible—something I knew little or nothing about. Like most books I began reading on page one and each night I would read three to five chapters. By the time I got to the Gospel books I was underlining long passages that impressed me. I can remember lying in bed and praying, "God, I don't know all that it means to believe in Christ, but whatever that means I want to do it." Months of reading the Bible prepared my heart to believe and validated what the Psalmist says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." **Sacred Scripture is important because it is often the root and foundation of conversion to Jesus.**

Over the next several years I read, studied, and memorized a lot of Scripture—108 verses in the first year of my life as a Christian. The Scripture-based principles, values, and wisdom I learned from the bible began transforming my life, first as a single Christian man and later as a husband and father. Many crises were diverted or diffused when the Holy Spirit brought to my attention passages that were particularly applicable to my life. For instance, in the early '70s I was deeply hurt because of unjust treatment I received from some Christian leaders. Consequentially, bitterness seeped into my life and for several months I lived with the darkness of anger. One day the Holy Spirit directed my attention to Philippians 2, which speaks of Jesus' descent from heaven and eventual abuse at the hands of men, including religious leaders. My first thought was, "That wasn't right!" Then the following verses told of Jesus' self-emptying and obedience "unto death." He did not strike back in anger as I was doing. It was a turning point of guidance from the darkness of anger to light of forgiveness, as I confessed to God my anger and bitterness. **Sacred Scripture is a guide and an instrument of spiritual formation.**

"Give yourself, then, to the Word. Trust in it. It is eternally faithful, like the God who speaks it and inhabits it."

Lastly, I wouldn't be a Catholic today had it not been for sacred Scripture. For 20 years prior to becoming involved with Catholicism I focused hours each week on doing inductive bible study and training others how to study God's Word. When I began reading Catholic books, encyclicals, and the Catechism I found my heart responding because my years of bible study affirmed the truth of what I was reading. Little did I anticipate finding that the Catholic Church was in fact a *Bible Church*, rooted and grounded in Scripture. Consequently, the decision to become Catholic was not difficult. **Sacred Scripture facilitated my journey to Catholicism.**

Why is learning Scripture so important? Bishop Bruno Forte says it much better than me; "In the Word it is God himself who comes to you and transforms you: . . . Give yourself, then, to the Word. Trust in it. It is eternally faithful, like the God who speaks it and inhabits it. That is why if you welcome the Word in faith, you will never be alone: In life, as in death, you will enter through it into the heart of God: 'Learn to know the heart of God by the Words of God.' Listen, read, meditate on the Word; taste it, love it, celebrate it; live it and proclaim it in Words and deeds: this is the way that is opening to you if you understand that in the Word of God is the fountain of life. In it God visits you in person. . . ." ¹



1 *The Word for Living: Sacred Scripture and the Beauty of God*, A Pastoral Letter for 2006–2007, by Archbishop Bruno Forte

Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

St. Jerome—Masterful Translator

“The Church venerates in St. Jerome the greatest doctor given her by heaven for the interpretation of Holy Scriptures.”¹

Born in 342 to a wealthy Christian family, Jerome was first educated in a secular environment and did not become a baptized Christian until he was 18. He became a masterful translator of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He

received priestly Holy Orders after studying theology from leading Christian teachers and living a life of austerity, prayer, and learning for four years as a desert hermit.

St. Jerome became involved in translating Scripture while serving as secretary to Pope Damasus. He translated the entire Bible into Latin, the language of the people. His translation was called the Vulgate Bible and served as the primary translation of the Catholic Church.

Pope Benedict XVI reminded us of how powerfully St. Jerome believed in the importance of the Scripture. “In truth, to converse with God and with his word means to be in heaven’s presence, that is to say, in God’s presence. To draw close to the biblical texts, above all to the New Testament, is essential for the believer, because ‘ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’ This is his famous sentence, also quoted by the Second Vatican Council in the constitution ‘Dei Verbum.’

“... Jerome asked himself: ‘How could we live without the science of Scriptures, through which we learn how to know Christ himself, who is the life of the believer?’ (Ep. 30,7). Hence the Bible, the instrument ‘with which God speaks to the faithful every day’ (Ep. 133,13), becomes [the] catalyst and source of Christian life for all situations and for everyone.

“To the Roman matron Laeta he gave the following advice for the Christian education of her daughter: ‘Make sure that every day she studies some passages of Scripture. . . . That she ensues from reading to praying and from praying to reading. . . . Instead of loving jewelry and silk garments, may she rather love the divine books’ (Ep. 107,9,12).”²

St. Jerome’s powerful commitment to learn and live sacred Scripture is well worth emulating.

Susan Bayne—Come and See

Susan converted to Catholicism from Judaism in 1960 when she was a sophomore in high school. Since that time her relationship with Jesus has been the guiding force of her life. She and her husband live in San Antonio, Texas, and are members of St. Brigid Catholic Church, where she is helping others experience a similar relationship to Jesus.

Susan’s life was greatly impacted in the ’80s and ’90s as she participated in a neighborhood small-group bible study. “Sharing insights, fellowship, and prayer were all powerful aspects of being in this group, but most profound of all was just having God’s Words . . . which I could turn to again and again, giving me daily ‘food.’ These ‘Words’ truly became my wisdom and my strength. They ‘informed my life,’ meaning, they were that Light for my path mentioned in Psalm 119:105.”

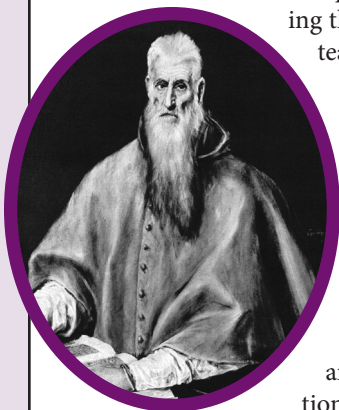
Susan was acutely motivated to try and share the importance of experiencing God’s Word in a small group with others. Five years ago she and some friends formed a Small Christian Community core team at St. Brigid’s but wrestled with how to get people involved.

They developed a program called “Come and See,” which invited people to “Come and see how God will touch *your* life when you study scripture, pray, and share fellowship with other Catholics.” They asked people “to commit for only seven weeks, and said that our **topic for the scripture study would be: Live the New Life.**¹

Both aspects of this Bible Study turned out to be ‘inspired.’ The idea of inviting our parishioners to try something at the Church for just seven weeks really resonated with them, and the material used left everyone raving.”

One participant said, “Don’t change the material you use for Come and See. Keep offering it so that our whole Church can benefit!” She had discovered what Susie had discovered years earlier; that a firsthand exposure to Scripture “was so amazingly powerful,” as was the ability to “point someone else to these passages.”

It is so amazing, that for Susan, “putting time aside in my life to do this remains critical to sustaining my relationship with the Lord.”



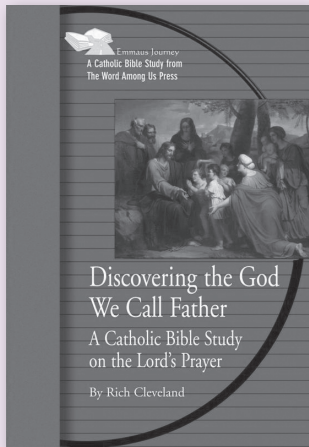
¹ Pope Benedict XV, from *The Lives of the Saints*, by Omer Englebert

² A Reflection on St. Jerome, by Pope Benedict XVI, translation provided by ZENIT

¹ From *Hiding God’s Word in Your Heart and Mind: The Catholic Topical Memory System*, published by Emmaus Journey

Tools You Can Use

Discovering the God We Call Father



Discovering the God We Call Father is the newest bible study in the Emmaus Journey Series. *Discovering the God We Call Father* enables participants to enter into a more profound understanding of some of those great mysteries of our faith contained in the Our Father prayer that Jesus taught his followers. As you complete this eight-chapter study each of the petitions in Our Father will take on new meaning for you each time you pray it. Additionally, this bible study will enable you to develop a new consciousness of your relationship to the Father as his dearly beloved child, and as an heir with Christ to all that is the Father's.

In this study you will find stimulating reflections, thought-provoking Scripture-based questions, enlightening Church teachings, and moving testimonies.

Discovering the God We Call Father can be ordered from Emmaus Journey or through your local Catholic bookstore.

- Available from www.emmausjourney.org
- Just \$9.95 per single copy
- Multiple copy discounts are available online

“Discovering the God We Call Father opens up for us one of the most familiar prayers of our faith. It helps us understand the key elements of the Our Father while at the same time encouraging us to learn how to pray—by praying.”

—Deacon Bill Bawden, author of *Signposts*

Knowing and Living the Scriptures continued from front page

His methodology involved reasoning with people “from the **scriptures**” (Acts 17:2) and recommending that they “attend to the public reading of **scripture**, to preaching, to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13).

The Catholic Church, of course, does a wonderful job of highlighting sacred Scripture with the inclusion of three or four passages at every Mass. Additionally, those who daily participate in the *Liturgy of the Hours* have a chance to meditate on thousands of passages every year, and by the end of the three-year cycle of Mass readings they will have covered much of the Bible. Yet for the average Catholic there remains a need for greater familiarity with Scripture through reading, study, and discussion.

Ghislaine was a few months short of her eightieth year and a parishioner of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, when she discovered the need and value of adding bible study and discussion to her habit of attending Mass. Upon Ghislaine's urging the pastor of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, Fr. Maurice Brindamour, agreed to lead a group of parishioners through one of our Emmaus Journey bible studies. This past year the parish continued with

51 participants as Fr. Brindamour and Fr. Finnegan, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, co-taught *Living In the Power of the Holy Spirit*, another study by Emmaus Journey. For Ghislaine and the others involved, the small-group bible study and discussion was “an awakening,” which enabled them to more fully welcome and appropriate sacred Scripture into their lives and to think about its application not only for themselves but also for the Church and the world. In Fr. Brindamour's words, “One of the most fruitful things we can do is to soak up God's Word. Scripture can truly transform us.”

Spending more time meditating on Scripture is something we can do whether we are 7 or 70. We ought to know and live the Bible—after all, we're Catholic. This is something we should do.

1 *Homily Of His Holiness Benedict XVI* at the Celebration Of First Vespers Of The Solemnity Of The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul For The Opening Of The Pauline Year

2 *The Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation*, a Vatican II Conciliar Document, 21