

## Questions about the Bible

### What's the difference between a "Catholic Bible" and a "Protestant Bible"?

Catholic and Protestant Bibles both include 27 books in the New Testament. Protestant Bibles have only 39 books in the Old Testament while Catholic Bibles have 46. The 7 books included in Catholic Bibles are Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch.

Catholic Bibles also include sections in the Books of Esther and Daniel which are not found in Protestant Bibles. These books are called the **deuterocanonical books**. The Catholic Church considers these books to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

### What's the difference between a Bible and a Lectionary?

Lectionary is composed of the readings and the responsorial psalm assigned for each Mass of the year (Sundays, weekdays, and special occasions). The readings are divided by the day or the theme (baptism, marriage, vocations, etc.) rather than according to the books of the Bible. Introductions and conclusions have been added to each reading. Not all of the Bible is included in the Lectionary.

### How can anyone own the copyright on the Bible? Isn't it free to everyone?

No one owns the copyright on the Bible itself. Rather, the copyright is held on particular translations or editions of the Bible. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) owns the copyright on the *New American Bible* translation. Some versions of the Bible, such as the *King James Version* (not the *New King James Version*) are in the public domain.

The copyright allows the owner to protect the integrity of the text so that individuals may not introduce changes without permission. Royalty fees earned by licensing the text to companies who publish and sell Bibles help to provide funds for Scripture scholarship and other educational needs.

## **Types of Bibles**

For **Papal Mass** (official bible of the church)  
Latin Vulgate Bible

For **private reading or study**, many are approved. Here's some of them:

- Good News – Catholic Edition
- Jerusalem Bible
- New Jerusalem Bible
- Revised Standard Version - Catholic Edition (The modern Bible translation regarded as the most accurate by most reliable scholars)
- New Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition
- New American Bible - Revised Edition
- Douay Rheims-Challoner Revision
- Knox Bible (not often but beautifully written translation)

There may not be a need to select only one translation of the Bible to use. There is no reason why a Catholic cannot collect several versions of the Bible, aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each. It is often possible to get a better sense of what is being said in a passage by comparing several different translations.

A Catholic bible should contain:

1. 73 books in it
2. An imprimatur sign from competent authority (usually a bishop)
3. Bishop's conference of a country would usually have released/recommended an official translation, which is used in the liturgy. It would be better if you can get hold of that version.

## **Which Bible is the best?**

The one you'll read.

### **Revised Standard Version - Catholic Edition**

Very literal translation that was the scholarly standard for second half of the twentieth century. This translation was worked on by a group of ecumenical scholars, then updated a bit by a group of Catholic scholars in the 60's. Even though this translation was completed in the mid-twentieth century, it still remains very solid, reliable, and readable. Many Catholic converts and Bible scholars prefer this translation.

## **New Revised Standard Version - Catholic Edition**

The NRSV was completed by an ecumenical group of scholars, consisting of Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox. Overall, it remains essentially literal (though less than RSV) and is quite good for both study and prayer. It reads very smoothly. For many, the NRSV is the scholarly standard ie. for university or seminary courses. One of its great advantages is that it uses the most up-to-date scholarship on recently discovered manuscripts, like the Dead Sea Scrolls. The NRSV is most notable for its use of inclusive language. For the most part, it is fine. Questionable most notably in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Hebrews 2: 6-8. Fortunately, the NRSV committee provided textual notes with the translation to show when changes have been made.

## **New Jerusalem Bible**

The New Jerusalem Bible is a dynamic equivalence translation that is both readable and accurate. It is not as literal as the RSV/NRSV. It is noted for its literary style and its use of the Divine Name YHWH instead of LORD, which is found in most other translations. The NJB truly shines in the poetry sections of the Bible, like the Psalms. The NJB is an update of the original Jerusalem Bible and introduced some modest inclusive language.

## **Douay-Rheims**

The traditional “Catholic Bible” in English was the Douay-Rheims version. The Old Testament was first published by the English College at Douai, France, in 1610, and the New Testament was published by the English College at Rheims in 1582. The whole translation, based on the Latin Vulgate, was later revised by Bishop Richard Challoner in 1749-1752.

The Douay-Rheims is the great historic Bible translation that most English-speaking Catholics used up until the mid-1960's. It remains a very literal translation that contains archaic English renderings. With the Vatican's call for translations from the original languages in Pius XII *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, the Church has encouraged the use of more modern translations that utilize the best and earliest manuscripts.

Although the “Douay” is no longer approved for use in Catholic worship, largely because of recent biblical research and scholarship, it is part of our Catholic heritage, and is still worth having as a “traditional-language” text used by Catholics for more than two centuries.