

Using the Scriptures

There was a time when many Catholics felt discouraged from reading the Scriptures for fear of misinterpreting them. Today the Church encourages regular use of the Bible and even serious study of it among all Catholics. The Scriptures play a critical role in our faith growth as a source of inspiration, celebration, education, and formation. The Bible both challenges and comforts those who read and reflect on it.

As a catechist you should become comfortable with using the Scriptures, and nurture such comfort in young people. If your experience with the Bible is limited, be honest about that with the young people in your groups. Tell them that you want to grow along with them in understanding this special book and making it a part of your life.

Objectives for Adolescent Biblical Literacy

Aim to help the young people do the following:

- feel comfortable reading the Bible and exploring it with others
- understand the structure of the Bible, recognize that it is a library of various kinds of literature, and have a sense of its origins
- become familiar with the major places, people, and events in the Bible, and their order and significance in salvation history
- develop the basic skills that allow them to explore the Bible and to locate passages
- grow in their appreciation of the role of the Scriptures in the Church's life, particularly in its liturgy
- deepen their reverence and affection for the Scriptures, be open to future Bible study, and desire to make the Bible a growing part of their spiritual lives
- understand the important role context plays in interpreting the meaning of a Scripture story or passage

Ways to Use the Scriptures in Faith Formation

- Use the Scriptures as part of prayer experiences and involve the participants in proclaiming the Scriptures.
- Use the Scriptures as the focus of study. Dedicate sessions to learning about biblical people and events, or apply biblical stories and lessons to the faith themes being studied.
- Use the Scriptures to make connections with the liturgy. Highlight any links between the lectionary readings for the upcoming Sunday and the topic you are teaching.
- Use the Scriptures to make a point. Mention favorite Bible stories or verses in your presentations and even in your casual conversation.
- Use activities that increase familiarity with the Scriptures: Bible search activities, Bible games, Scripture scavenger hunts, and so on.
- Look to the Scriptures for guidance when discussing life issues. Encourage the young people to read the Scriptures and to reflect on the meaning for their lives.

Hints for Using the Scriptures Effectively

- Designate one Bible as the group Bible. The way you use this group Bible should convey the special nature of the Scriptures and should show reverence and respect for them.
- Display the group Bible on a prayer table in a special way. Place it on a book stand with a candle, a cross, or others symbols, but do not clutter the display.
- Involve the young people in proclaiming the Scriptures. Practice with them in advance to ensure they are adequately prepared; the Scriptures can lose much of their power if read poorly.
- Make Bibles available for all the young people. Avoid making the participants feel too formal in their use of personal copies of the Scriptures. They should treat their personal Bibles as they would a treasured book for study and enjoyment.