

Using Scripture

There was a time when many Catholics felt discouraged from reading Sacred Scripture for fear of misinterpreting it. Today the Church encourages regular use of the Bible and even serious study of it among all Catholics. Scripture plays 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 using Scripture, and should 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 Scripture in the Church's life, particularly in its liturgy
- deepen their reverence and affection for Scripture, 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 Scripture in Faith Formation

- Use Scripture as part of prayer experiences and involve the participants in proclaiming Sacred Scripture.
- Use Scripture 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 Scripture to make connections with the liturgy. Highlight any links between the *Lectionary* readings for the upcoming Sunday and the topic you are teaching.
- Use Scripture 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 Scripture: Bible search activities, Bible games, Scripture scavenger hunts, and so on.
- Look to Scripture for guidance when discussing life issues. Encourage the young people to read Scripture and to reflect on the meaning for their lives.

Hints for Using Scripture Effectively

- Designate one Bible as the *group Bible*. The way you use this group Bible should convey the special nature of Scripture and should show reverence and respect for Sacred Scripture.
- Display the group Bible on a prayer table in a special way. Place it on a book stand with a candle, a cross, or other symbols, but do not clutter the display.
- Involve the young people in proclaiming Scripture. Practice with them in advance to ensure they are adequately prepared; Scripture can lose much of its 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 Bible. They should treat their personal Bibles as they would a treasured book for study and enjoyment.