



# National Bible Week 2015

THE BIBLE: A BOOK FOR THE FAMILY

## Making the Word of God a Part of Your Home

The priest was near death, his body surrendering to a long struggle with cancer. He had spent his entire life immersed in the Word of God. He loved to tell others how he had caught his love for the Bible from his parents, who had read him favorite stories at bedtime. His love of Scripture grew through adolescence and young adulthood, nurtured by a favorite catechist and a kind pastor, a vibrant homilist. After ordination the priest was invited to pursue biblical studies, a path that eventually led to a long career as a renowned Scripture scholar. Admired by the scholarly community and loved by his students, he took to heart the famous words of St. Jerome: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” Thanks to his parents, the seed of God’s Word was sown early in his life and took deep root. In this seed, he discovered a friendship with Christ, an intimacy that deepened each passing year. Now he prayed, quietly and peacefully, “Lord, I sought your Word, and you found me. You know I’m ready. Your Word has been my light and my life. I live no longer, but you live in me.”

What greater desire could any parents have for their children than to form a friendship with Christ that would grow and deepen throughout a lifetime—to live and die as this holy priest, rapt in God’s love to the end, a friendship discovered early in the home through the sharing of God’s Word. This is the wish the Church has for all God’s people, young and old.

National Bible Week highlights the Church’s desire that the Word of God be a central focus in all aspects of Catholic life. The Church draws nourishment from the Word in numerous ways: in its liturgy and prayer, in its work of evangelization and catechesis, in biblical exegesis and theology, and in the lives of believers in whom God’s Word takes root.

Nowhere is the potential for God’s Word taking firm root greater than in the home. National Bible Week provides a unique opportunity for parents to revisit and renew their understanding of the power of the Word of God in the life

of their family. As leaders of the “domestic Church,” parents are encouraged to be not only the first but the best of teachers for their children in the ways of faith. Parents help fulfill this challenge by ensuring that Scripture, the living Word of God, is given due emphasis in the life and activity of the home.

The more deeply the Word is rooted in the home, the more the entire family grows in relationship to Christ and to one another. Parents today rightly take time to promote family health by choosing appropriate food, drink, and exercise to build healthy bodies and by forming their children in proper study habits. A critical component of the spiritual health of any family is a well-balanced diet of God’s Word. Wise parents understand that building healthy habits requires daily attention and repetition, rather than occasional focus. The same is true of habits in the home surrounding the Word of God. It must be a daily effort. The following suggestions can help families make the Word of God part of their regular home life.

### Focus First on Self

The first rule of making the Word of God a central part of the home is to first make it a priority in one’s own life. Parents cannot pass on to children what is not firmly rooted in their own lives. Take a few moments each day to read God’s Word. Slowly pray through a Gospel or a New Testament letter, reading a few minutes each day. Be sure that your children see you spending time with the Word. The daily Scripture readings (in English and Spanish) can be found at and printed from [www.usccb.org/bible](http://www.usccb.org/bible). Those who listen to podcasts can download the daily readings from this same address.

### Invite Others

Begin simply within the family. Suggest reading a brief Bible verse together each day. This can be done at the conclusion of a meal, as part of a bedtime ritual, or prior to school and work as a blessing for the day. Prepare a bowl with slips of Scripture verses, and place it on the family table. Invite

family members to take turns drawing a passage from the bowl, finding it in the Bible, and reading it to everyone. Discuss it briefly, and end by thanking God for the gift of his Word.

### **Dust Off That Family Bible**

Many homes have a family Bible tucked away on a shelf. Bring it out, and make it visible. Ensure that children have age-appropriate Bibles at their bedside for prayer and for storytime. Seek out Scripture stories in audio formats. Ask your parish catechetical director or pastor for suggestions on where to locate resources.

### **Show Reverence**

Communicate in word and action that the Bible is a special book, worthy of reverence. When reading the Bible, handle it carefully, modeling to the family that it is God's holy Word. Enthrone the Bible in a special room or in a corner set aside for family prayer. Place the Bible on a piece of cloth (use the colors of the liturgical season) on a small table with a candle or vigil light. Gather around the Bible each day for a short family prayer. (A service for "Enthroning the Bible in the Family" is available at [www.usccb.org/bible/nationalbibleweek.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/bible/nationalbibleweek.cfm).)

### **Link Parish and Home**

Don't let what happens in church stay in church. Do your best to bring the Word home each week, making connections between the liturgy and the home. Read the weekly Scriptures before or on the way to Sunday Mass (find the daily liturgical readings, both in text and as a podcast, at the USCCB Web site, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)). Promote active listening at weekly Mass by asking children what they heard in the homily and discussing how it applies to the family. Bring home a favorite song or a refrain to sing during family prayer.

### **Special Programs**

Look over your parish's offerings for a special catechetical program the family could attend. Many parishes offer occasional intergenerational gatherings or seasonal days of prayer. At home, designate one night each month as family Bible night. Together, watch a DVD on the life of Jesus (or an animated Bible story, if children are younger), look up information on Jesus and the Bible on Catholic sites on the

Internet, play a Bible game, or work on a puzzle or a craft that promotes familiarity with the Bible. Check Catholic goods stores for resources.

### **Be Creative**

Teach your family scriptural "mantras"—short phrases taken from the Bible, quietly repeated over and over (i.e., "The LORD is my light and my salvation," "Fear not, for I have redeemed you," "I have called you by name," etc.). Use these mantras as part of family prayer and meditation. Place love notes with Bible verses in your children's school lunch bags or under the pillows on their beds. Look for other ways to keep God's Word in front of them.

### **Liturgical Seasons**

Use the rhythms of the liturgical year to highlight God's Word. Include a copy of the Bible in your Christmas display to symbolize the Word Incarnate. Have children re-enact Christmas and Easter stories. Focus extra attention on family scriptural prayer during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

### **Lectio Divina**

The ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*, the "holy reading" of the Scriptures, is a method of scriptural prayer encouraged for all Catholics in the preparation documents for the 2008 Synod of Bishops. This process involves reading biblical passages slowly and reflectively, allowing them to shape and transform our lives. This method can be prayed individually or be learned by the entire family and made part of the life of the home. (A longer description of *Lectio Divina* is available at [www.usccb.org/bible/nationalbibleweek.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/bible/nationalbibleweek.cfm)).

### **Conclusion**

By actively participating in some form of involvement with the Bible, your family can be assured that the Word of God will become a prominent part of your home and that family members will, at an early age, recognize the person of Christ in his Word and grow in God's love throughout their lives.