

SACRED SCRIPTURE

2Kings 5:14-17; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19

Like the first reading, this Gospel shows that the blessings of the Almighty are not limited to the Jewish people. Jesus is obeying the Mosaic Law in his approach to dealing with these ten lepers as is written in the Pentateuch: "This is the rite of the leper, when he is to be cleansed, he shall be brought to the priest" (Leviticus 14:2). In this story and in the Law one can sense a foreshadowing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as leprosy represents the uncleanness of sin and a priest is required to be once again declared clean. In defense of our Catholic faith, this story would seem to suggest that to be washed clean of our sins, Christ and a priest are required; it's not that Christ alone isn't sufficient, but the evidence certainly intimates that this is the way our Redeemer architected the process of reconciliation. This is made even more apparent in John's Gospel (cf. John 20:22-23). The mercy of God to all his creation is revealed here. Christ's message of salvation was first revealed to his own people but not accepted by them. This is represented by the other nine lepers who were cured but did not return to offer gratitude to the Messiah. The only one to return to offer gratitude is a Samaritan, representing the Gentiles who are the extension of Christ's saving grace; and the Samaritan's gratitude symbolizes the acceptance of Christ as the Messiah by the Gentiles. The Church's official teaching is that salvation is universal. The Catechism teaches that all are implicated in Adam's sin, and so, as one man's trespass led to the condemnation of all, so one Man's [Christ] act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all (cf. CCC 402). As Catholics, we have to be careful not to become part of the group of nine who never returned to offer gratitude. In the pre-Conciliar Church it was a common practice to remain in the church building after Mass to offer thanksgiving in private, even if only for a few moments. And of course, the Finger of God on our Church has brought forth so many extraordinary examples of sanctity, like Saint Louis de Montfort, who would remain in deep prayer after Mass for a couple of hours. Jesus is our Savior and our food who will sustain us and carry us into eternal life. The Eucharist is a great, selfless gift given by Christ to his Church. But repetition can lead to a disposition that is something less than edifying; which is why Catholics have to be on guard to avoid having the daily or weekly reception of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ become something that is taken for granted. "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"

Saints Speak

*"Just as at the sea those who are carried away from the direction of the harbor bring themselves back on course by a clear sign, on seeing a tall beacon light of some mountain peak coming into view, so scripture may guide those adrift on the sea of life back into the harbor of divine will."*

**Gregory of Nyssa**

*"The collection of Psalms found in Scripture, composed as it was under divine inspiration, has, from the very beginnings of the Church, shown a wonderful power of fostering devotion among Christians."*

**St. Pius X**

*"Read unwearingly the precepts of the Lord and, sufficiently instructed by them, you will know what to avoid and what to pursue."*

**St. Bernard of Clairvaux**



From the Catechism

**Christ—The Unique Word of Sacred Scripture**

- 101** In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words: "Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men."
- 102** Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely:  
You recall that one and the same Word of God extends throughout Scripture, that it is one and the same Utterance that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers, since he who was in the beginning God with God has no need of separate syllables; for he is not subject to time.
- 103** For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body.
- 104** In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God." "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them."

**Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture**

- 105** *God is the author of Sacred Scripture.* "The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."  
"For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself."
- 106** God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. "To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more."
- 107** The inspired books teach the truth. "Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures."
- 108** Still, the Christian faith is not a "religion of the book." Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living." If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, "open [our] minds to understand the Scriptures."  
The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it.

**The Holy Spirit, Interpreter of Scripture**

- 109** In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.
- 110** In order to discover *the sacred authors' intention*, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. "For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression."



- 111** But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written."
- 112** 1. *Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture."* Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.
- The phrase "heart of Christ" can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.
- 113** 2. *Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church."* According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture ("according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church").
- 114** 3. *Be attentive to the analogy of faith.* By "analogy of faith" we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

### **The Canon of Scripture**

- 120** It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.

*The Old Testament:* Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

*The New Testament: the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude, and Revelation (the Apocalypse).*

### **The Old Testament**

- 121** The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked.
- 122** Indeed, "the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men." "Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional," the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's saving love: these writings "are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way."
- 123** Christians venerate the Old Testament as true Word of God. The Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void (Marcionism).

### **The New Testament**

**124** "The Word of God, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, is set forth and displays its power in a most wonderful way in the writings of the New Testament" which hand on the ultimate truth of God's Revelation. Their central object is Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son: his acts, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church's beginnings under the Spirit's guidance.

**125** The *Gospels* are the heart of all the Scriptures "because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Savior."



## Word Wise

Scripture - The term "scripture" is not exclusively Christian. It refers to the body of sacred texts that a particular religious tradition refers in its spiritual life. These texts are considered inspired or in some manner reveal the divine, or insight into the divine will. For Christians, our Scriptures are what we commonly refer to as the Bible, the Old and New Testaments as determined in the use and tradition of the Church and affirmed by the Council of Trent nearly 500 years ago.

Bible derives from the Greek biblios or "book". Our scriptures come today in a book format, but they were originally spoke stories and came to be written down in various formats. When manuscripts began to be bound and then moveable type was invented books as we know them became more prevalent. The Bible is not one book but a book of books with various authors, styles and themes all of which are intended to reveal some aspect of the nature of God, the relationship between God and creation and the spiritual calling that is inherent to each person.

Inspiration When referring to Scripture, "inspiration" is the belief that the Scriptures, although written by human hand, are through the work of the Holy Spirit in reality the "Word of God." See 2 Timothy 3:16-17. In the Gospels, Jesus explains that David, for example, wrote the Psalms by the power of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament makes several references to the origin of the Old Testament scriptures as inspired, but not to itself. It was the early Church that spoke of inspiration of the New Testament as well. The term is not limited to the origin of the Scriptures, but refers also to their effect as well when we listen to or read the Bible, which gives the statement after the readings at Mass – "The Word of the Lord" or "The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" – a double meaning.

Gospel This word is derived from old English meaning "good news". The term gospels, particularly in the Christian context, are those four book in the New Testament that relay the events, circumstances and sayings of Jesus and those who shared primarily in his public life. Implied in the usage of the word is that which is considered "gospel" is indeed true, as in "I swear that's the gospel truth!" The four gospels are the most important of the scriptures for Christians.

Parable In the gospels, Jesus uses parables with some frequency, especially when he is speaking about the "kingdom" or "reign" of God or "heaven". A parable is a story that uses allegory or metaphor to speak about things of God, morality and human spirituality, which cannot be described or explained directly. The parables offer us insights into the mystery of God and the relationship of God with humanity. Parables may have many levels of meaning that keeps them dynamic and meaningful. They are not simply truisms or sayings, but opportunities to experience God being revealed thru the use of imagination and reflection.

Epistle - An epistle is a letter, like the kind someone writes to another. It is a Greek word that finds its way into the language of the Church since the first language of most Christians in the early Church was Greek. Some of the letters written by the Apostles and their assistants have been included in the Christian Scriptures and are often read at the Sunday Liturgy.

*Remember to read the scripture readings for next week, the 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C and do the journal keeping on p. 168 of the Catechumen's Companion.*