Part 4: Interpreting the bible

HOW CATHOLICS DO IT

Learning Outcomes
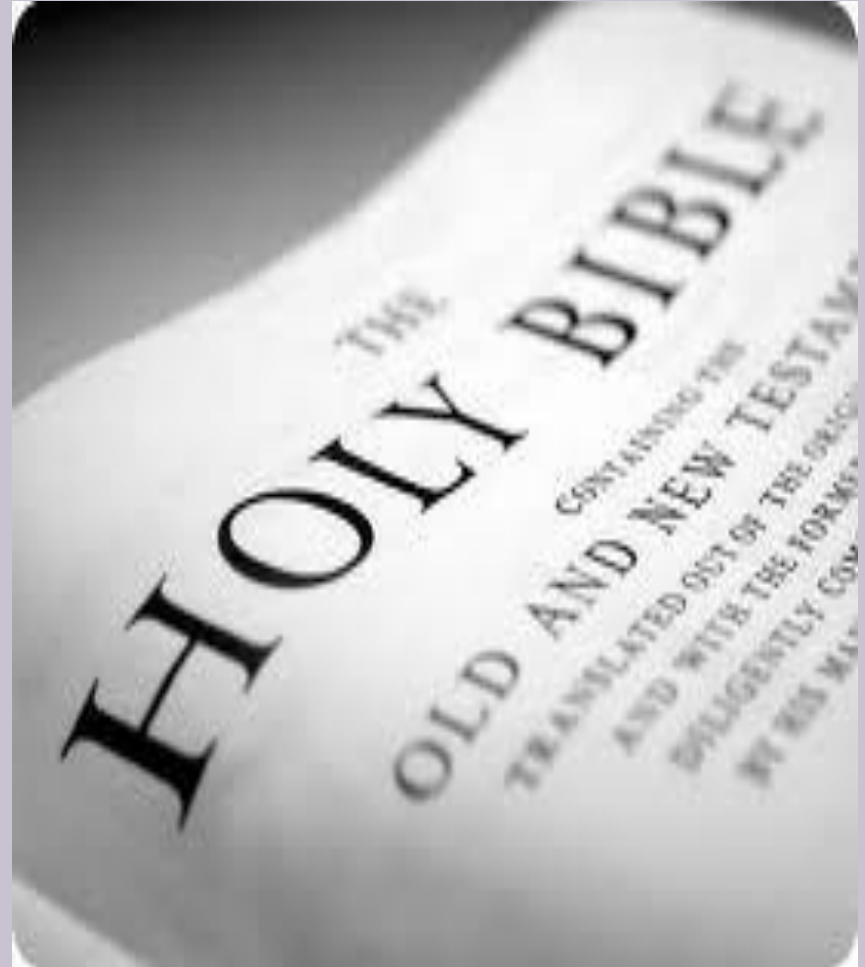
- Identify Catholic understandings about the authority of the Bible

WITH APOCRYPHA/DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS

CATHOLIC

GOOD NEWS BIBLE

Church Teachings

- Attention must be given to the literary genres/forms found in Scripture and it must be interpreted correctly.

Why Bother?

In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to us 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.

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation 12

How do we?...

Pay attention to:

a) What the human authors truly wanted to affirm.

b) What God wanted to reveal to us by the authors' words.

By using an accepted

Method of biblical interpretation

Historical Criticism

- Reconstructs the historical situation.
- Works to identify what the author actually meant to say.
- Is basic to all other forms of interpretation.
  - Source criticism is a sub-discipline.

Types of Questions

In order to interpret a passage using historical criticism the following types of questions are asked of the text.

- What were the historic, social, cultural, political contexts?
- When & where was it written?
- By whom was it written?
- Who were the audiences?
- What sources were used?

Interpreting the Bible

Literary Criticism

- Examines text as a finished piece of literature.

- Analyses language use, style, genres etc.

- Focus what can be learnt from text itself.

  o Narrative criticism is a specialised branch.

Types of Questions

In order to interpret a passage using literary criticism the following types of questions are asked of the text.

o What use is made of language, style & genre in the text.

o How are characters portrayed?

o How are relationships presented?

o What audiences are addressed?

o Who was the passage written for?

Using a method

- Carefully read the Scripture passage.
- Answer the questions.
  - Continually ask yourself
    - How does this affect the meaning of the text?
    - What is this telling me that helps me understand what the passage is saying?