

## What Bible Version Makes Sense to Have in Our Homes?

We live at a time when there are so many different translations of the Bible that it is difficult to know which one(s) are best for our own use. Many older Catholics immediately think of the King James translation from the 16<sup>th</sup> c. (sometimes called the “Authorized Version”) as the Protestant version and the Douay-Rheims translation as the Catholic version, since these two versions dominated Protestant and Catholic use of the Bible respectively, until the last 50 years. Both have become outdated. The King James because it never had a Catholic edition and its language is quaint and not easily understandable today. The Douay-Rheims because it only translated the old Latin version (called the Vulgate) and did not go back to the original languages of Greek and Hebrew.

In recent years the New International Version (1984) has taken over where the King James Version left off, becoming very popular among many Protestant groups. Again, though, there is no Catholic version of this translation and it is not approved for Catholic liturgical use. A very popular version over the last 50 years has been the Revised Standard Version (1962), which comes in both Catholic editions and non-Catholic ones, often with many study notes and good footnotes. Although it has been approved for liturgical use in the Eucharist, the bishops of the United States have decided not to allow its use at Mass (Canadian bishops do allow it). A more recent re-translation by the same group is the New Revised Standard Version (1989), with much more inclusive language when referring to human beings. Again, there are Catholic and non-Catholic editions as well as detailed study editions. The New Jerusalem Bible (1985) is a very well done and specifically Catholic translation, which attempts to be both accurate and poetic. It has excellent footnotes and background information, but it is not approved for liturgical use. There is also the very popular American Bible Society translation, called the Good News Bible, which updates its earlier (1991) Contemporary English version. It has a Catholic edition and uses language aimed at a grade school level of understanding. The official Catholic Lectionary for Children used the 1991 translation in its passages.

What do we mean by a “Catholic” version? In the arguments at the time of the Reformation, one of the disputed topics was which books to include in the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament for Protestants and Catholics ended up having the same set of books, although for a time Luther and others argued for the lesser status of the Letter to the Hebrews, James, Jude, and the Book of Revelations. But the Old Testament ended up differing, because certain books were deemed “secondary to the main canon” (deuterocanonical) and others of doubtful inspiration altogether (apocryphal or pseudepigraphical). Catholics and Protestants did not agree on which fell into which category at times, so that Catholic versions have 46

books in the Old Testament and most Protestant versions list only 39, relegating the other 7 to non-canonical status (Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch). That is why one must check whether a Bible is designated as a “Catholic version” or at least includes the disputed books in a separate section.

In purchasing a Bible, we strongly recommend you avoid any condensed or paraphrased translation that tries to make the Bible contemporary but ends up distorting many passages of the Bible. The Reader’s Digest Bible, the Living Bible and the New Living Translation are examples of these. We strongly recommend that you get a Catholic edition of whatever translation you are using and, if there is no such version, don’t use that translation. We highly recommend study editions or editions that have articles and footnotes giving background to the biblical material.

Given all the above, although it is far from being a perfect translation, we recommend the specifically Catholic Bible called **The New American Bible with a Revised New Testament and Psalms (1991)**. There is a 1970 version but the entire New Testament and Psalms was revised, especially for use at liturgy. Since for Catholics the Bible is especially connected to the living Word we experience at the Sunday Eucharist, this translation would seem to be the best starting point, if you wanted to own only one translation, because it is the one approved for use at liturgy in the United States. It went back to the original Greek and Hebrew languages in making its translations and tried to be a bit more sensitive to gender-inclusive language (although it does not do this consistently). There are various editions of this Bible, depending on what size, how much study material you want and so forth. The key is to look at the title to make sure it is the New American Bible with a Revised New Testament and Psalms.



We will have on sale the St. Joseph paperback edition of this version of the Bible from the Catholic Book Publishing Company. It has good articles and footnotes, is modestly priced (\$10) and in larger print. If you do not own a Bible for the home, we encourage you to purchase one, either this edition or make your own choice at a bookstore given the information above. Bibles (and The Catechism of the Catholic Church) are always available at the parish office.