

## Bible Sunday

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Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy scriptures  
to be written for our learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,  
we may embrace and ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life  
which you have given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Our text may be found in Paul's letter to the Colossians chapter 3 and verse 16:

**'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.'**

Today, the last Sunday in Trinity is also Bible Sunday, a chance to remember what is at the heart of our faith in God, the Word of God, Holy Scripture, our Bible.

The Bible is more than simply a book – it is more like a library, a collection of books. The Old Testament, written in Hebrew, is some 39 books. The New Testament, written in Greek, has 27 books. These were later translated into Latin, the better to understand the text if you lived in Western Europe at that time. Then, 500 years ago, one of the fruits of the Reform was to make sure the Bible was translated into the language the people spoke in the country in which they

lived. When I was a boy at primary school, the King James or Authorised Version of the Bible was the norm. When, as a teenager, I was studying O Level RE, I was excited at the publication of the New English Bible in 1965. When I was baptised as a young adult in 1969, my friends, Brian and Kathy, gave me an RSV, a Revised Standard Version and, in our pews today in St Bart's, we the NRSV, the New Revised Standard Version. And I remember, at university in 1971, rushing over to the bookshop to buy the Good News Bible, an attempt to paraphrase the Bible into more contemporary English.

So why is the Bible at the heart of our faith? Simply because we believe that it is the inspired word of God: that different people at different times have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God to his people, to share what God is directly encouraging them to communicate to other people. What has been written is our attempt to pass on what has been shared with us and, as a priest, one of my given tasks is to try to make sense of what I read, have read, in a way that you can understand. And may I honestly share with you that I am invariably really excited when I sit at my computer in my study to write each Sunday's sermon.

Of course, times do change and how we make sense of right and proper behaviour can change over time but the principles of right living that the Bible enshrines are there for us 'to hear, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' as today's collect succinctly suggests so that we can the better be informed properly informed to live an authentic Christian life.

Okay, I do appreciate that it is possible to get things wrong by being over literally minded: Jesus accused the Pharisees of paying more attention to the letter of the law than the underlying, informing spirit of what is actually written. But if we simply take the example of the Ten Commandments, then there is the recipe for good, moral living. It puts, according to Jesus summary of the Law, the love of God first and the love of neighbour second even as we love ourselves. Respect for God, respect for Man, are at the heart of our faith.

So today, Bible Sunday, with our text from Colossians in mind 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly' let me ask you again to reflect on why the Bible should be important to you, to all of us. And the challenge: do you know your Bible sufficiently well for it to speak to you even when you're not here in St Bart's on a Sunday, listening to it being read and hearing someone explaining it in part in the sermon ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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G: Sermons 36 : Bible Sunday

