

Studying - Reading – Sharing God's Word

Texts of Scripture can have various levels of meaning. There is not the one universal interpretation. How individuals and communities interpret a biblical text depends greatly on their life situation and their cultural background. There are several ways to approach biblical texts:

- In **Bible study** one wants to better understand what the author wanted to say with the text at that time and in what historical context it was written. Footnotes and exegetical commentaries are helpful.
- When reading of the Bible in prayerful way, which is called **Lectio Divina**, I ask myself what God wants to tell me through this text at this moment of my life.
- In **Bible sharing** we read a text of Scripture together, everyone says what touches him or her particularly in the text and what it means for them. In the end we ask ourselves how the Word challenges us as a community to act. The richness and complexity of the Word of God can be experienced, because in the same text each individual sees and hears something different that is relevant for him/her right now. The contribution of each individual is not discussed or criticized, but simply accepted by all as a gift and a source of inspiration.

Texts

- The word (of God) has as many aspects as those who study it. The Lord has coloured his word with diverse beauties, so that those who study it can contemplate what stirs them.
Ephraim, zitiert in Papst Franziskus, MP – Motu Proprio Aperuit Illis 2
- When sacred Scripture is read in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written, it remains ever new... The sacred text as a whole serves a prophetic function regarding not the future but the present of whoever is nourished by this word. MP 12



Learning from Africa

One of the most important pastoral decisions of the African Church was the orientation to group the Christians of the huge parishes of East and Central Africa into small communities. A dozen or more families meet regularly to pray together, share a biblical text and address practical questions and problems. In this way the Bible becomes the centre of their community.

In these communities Christians can freely exchange ideas without priests, who are often shaped by Western theology and philosophy through their seminary training. When lay people share about the Word of God among themselves, it is a unique opportunity to understand a biblical text from their culture and their daily reality and ask themselves what the message means for their own life and for their community.

Biblical stories can also be a starting point to talk about current and delicate issues. Genesis 38 raises questions about sexual violence against women; the prophet Amos denounces the abuse of power and corruption; the creation stories in Gen 1 and 2 remind us of our responsibility for the environment.

cf. LS 65-75

Suggestions for reading and sharing biblical texts

„Lectio Divina“ (and also bible sharing) consists of reading God's word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us. In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: “Lord, what does this text say to me? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this? Or perhaps: What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?” When we make an effort to listen to the Lord, temptations usually arise. One of them is simply to feel troubled or burdened, and to turn away. Another common temptation is to think about what the text means for other people, and so avoid applying it to our own life. Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 153