



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

The Canon of the Bible

The canon of the Bible refers to the definitive list of the books which are considered to be divine revelation and included therein. A canon distinguishes what is revealed and divine from what is not revealed and human. "Canon" (Greek *kanon*) means a reed; a straight rod or bar; a measuring stick; something serving to determine, rule, or measure. Because God did not explicitly reveal what books are the inspired books of the Bible, title by title, to anyone, we must look to His guidance in discovering the canon of the Bible.

Jesus has told us that he has not revealed all truths to us: Jn 16:12-13—*I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.*

Jesus then told us how he was planning to assist us in knowing other truths: Jn 14:16-17—*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.* Jn 15:26—*When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.*

The New Testament writers sensed how they handled truth-bearing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth: 1 Cor 15:3-4—*For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received ...*

2 Tim 2:2—*And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.*

There was a constant history of faithful people from Paul's time through the Apostolic and Post Apostolic Church.

- Melito, bishop of Sardis, an ancient city of Asia Minor (see Rev 3), c. 170 AD produced the first known Christian attempt at an Old Testament canon. His list maintains the Septuagint order of books but contains only the Old Testament protocanonicals minus the Book of Esther.
- The Council of Laodicea, c. 360, produced a list of books similar to today's canon. This was one of the Church's earliest decisions on a canon.
- Pope Damasus, 366-384, in his Decree, listed the books of today's canon.
- The Council of Rome, 382, was the forum which prompted Pope Damasus' Decree.
- Bishop Exuperius of Toulouse wrote to Pope Innocent I in 405 requesting a list of canonical books. Pope Innocent listed the present canon.
- The Council of Hippo, a local north Africa council of bishops created the list of the Old and New Testament books in 393 which is the same as the Roman Catholic list today.
- The Council of Carthage, a local north Africa council of bishops created the same list of canonical books in 397. This is the council which many Protestant and Evangelical Christians take as the authority for the New Testament canon of books. The Old Testament canon from the same council is identical to Roman Catholic canon today...
- Since the Roman Catholic Church does not define truths unless errors abound on the matter, Roman Catholic Christians look to the Council of Flor-

ence, an ecumenical council in 1441 for the first definitive list of canonical books.

●The final infallible definition of canonical books for Roman Catholic Christians came from the Council of Trent in 1556 in the face of the errors of the Reformers who rejected seven Old Testament books from the canon of scripture to that time.

There was no canon of scripture in the early Church; there was no Bible... The Church did not *create* the canon; she *discerned* the canon. Fixed canons of the Old and New Testaments, hence the Bible, were not known much before the end of the 2nd and early 3rd century.

Catholic Christians together with Protestant and Evangelical Christians hold the *same canon of the New Testament, 27 books*, all having been originally written in the Greek language.

Catholic Christians accept *the longer Old Testament canon, 46 books*, from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Alexandrian Canon.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians, from the Reformers onward, accept the *shorter Old Testament canon, 39 books*, from the Hebrew Palestinian Canon. Jews have the same canon as Protestants.

Canonical books are those books which have been acknowledged as belonging to the list of books the Church considers to be inspired and to contain a rule of faith and morals. Some criteria used to determine canonicity were special relation to God, i.e., inspiration; apostolic origin; and used in Church services, i.e., used by the community of believers guided by the Holy Spirit.

Issue 53

November 30, 2008

Other terms for canonical books should be distinguished: the protocanonical books, deuterocanonical books, and the apocryphal books.

- The *protocanonical* (from the Greek *proto* meaning first) books are those books of the Bible that were admitted into the canon of the Bible with little or no debate (e.g., the Pentateuch of the Old Testament and the Gospels)
- The *deuterocanonical* (from the Greek *deutero* meaning second) books are those books of the Bible that were under discussion for a while until doubts about their canonicity were resolved (e.g. Sirach and Baruch of the Old Testament, and the Johanne epistles of the New Testament).
- The *apocryphal* (from the Greek *apokryphos* meaning hidden) books have multiple meanings: complimentary meaning - that the sacred books were too exalted for the general public; pejorative meaning - that the orthodoxy of the books were questioned; heretical meaning - that the books were forbidden to be read; and lastly neutral meaning - simply noncanonical books, the meaning the word has today.
- Another word, *pseudepigrapha* (from the Greek meaning false writing) is used for works clearly considered to be false.

By Paul Flanagan and
Robert Schihl found at
[www.catholicapologetics.org/
ap030700.htm](http://www.catholicapologetics.org/ap030700.htm)



Saint of the Day: St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552)

On Wednesday, December 3, the Church will remember St Francis Xavier.

Jesus asked, “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Matthew 16:26a). The words were repeated to a young teacher of philosophy who had a highly promising career in academics, with success and a life of prestige and honor before him.

Francis Xavier, 24 at the time, and living and teaching in Paris, did not heed these words at once. They came from a good friend, Ignatius of Loyola, whose tireless persuasion finally won the young man to Christ. Francis then made the spiritual exercises under the direction of Ignatius, and in 1534 joined his little community (the infant Society of Jesus). Together at Montmartre they vowed poverty, chastity and apostolic service according to the directions of the pope.

From Venice, where he was ordained

priest in 1537, Francis Xavier went on to Lisbon and from there sailed to the East Indies, landing at Goa, on the west coast of India. For the next 10 years he labored to bring the faith to such widely scattered peoples as the Hindus, the Malayans and the Japanese. He spent much of that time in India, and served as provincial of the newly established Jesuit province of India.

Wherever he went, he lived with the poorest people, sharing their food and rough accommodations. He spent countless hours ministering to the sick and the poor, particularly to lepers. Very often he had no time to sleep or even to say his breviary but, as we know from his letters, he was filled always with joy.

Francis went through the islands of Malaysia, then up to Japan. He learned enough Japanese to preach to simple folk, to instruct and to baptize, and to establish missions for those who were to follow him.

From Japan he had dreams of going to China, but this plan was never realized. Before reaching the mainland he died. His remains are enshrined in the Church of Good Jesus in Goa.

Comment:

All of us are called to “go and preach to all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Our preaching is not necessarily on distant shores but to our families, our children, our husband or wife, our coworkers. And we are called to preach not with words, but by our everyday lives. Only by sacrifice, the giving up of all selfish gain, could Francis Xavier be free to bear the Good News to the world. Sacrifice is leaving yourself behind at times for a greater good, the good of prayer, the good of helping someone in need, the good of just listening to another. The greatest gift we have is our time. Francis gave his to others. www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay

What if Every Catholic in the Diocese of Rochester Read the Same Book? Project Mark

Imagine the power of having all of us read the same book: the Gospel of Mark!

Spirit Alive! invites us all to know and understand Scripture better. What better way to do that than to devote some time to reading one book of the Bible: The Gospel of Mark?

Why Mark? During this liturgical year, the whole Church will hear the Gospel of Mark. During Ordinary Time our Sunday Gospels will be from the Gospel of Mark.

The Gospel of Mark was written for early Christians who were experiencing persecution and suffering for their faith. It portrays Jesus as a man of action, a man always on the move to Spread the Word.

Things to consider as you read the Gospel of Mark.

How is Jesus' humanity revealed in this Gospel? How is His Divinity revealed?

How does Mark describe Jesus?

How would you describe what you have learned about Jesus?

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus according to Mark?

What is the role of suffering in this Gospel?

Readings for Project Mark

Date	Read
Nov. 30:	Chapter One Reflect on Mk 1:1-8
Dec. 7:	Chapter Two Reflect on Mk. 2:1-12
Dec. 14:	Chapter Three Reflect on Mk. 3:13-19 & Mk. 3:31-34
Dec. 21 & 28	The Christmas Story
Jan. 4:	Chapter Four Reflect on Mk. 4:35-41

Go to www.Rochesterspiritallive.org for weekly reflection questions.

To be continued...

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.