

## BEGINNING BIBLE WORKSHOP

### Fall 2011

#### ***Instructor Information***

Instructor: Dr. Bob Schihl  
Phone: 757-499-4994, x315 (Leave a brief message and your phone number and I will return the call in a reasonable amount of time.)  
E-mail : [BobS@stgregorysva.org](mailto:BobS@stgregorysva.org) I receive these e-mails directly and I will respond ASAP.

It would be good for prospective students to read this syllabus and have an understanding of their commitment to the class. Questions or concerns need to be addressed to the instructor.

#### ***Class Description***

Because God left His Word for us, it goes without saying that He intended that we read and understand what He wishes to reveal to us. Part of any communication, to be successful, is the background to the communication whether it is written or spoken. This class will offer the essential background to the Bible that helps us understand what God would have us know. This includes its origins (where did the Bible come from), who wrote it, when was it written, what kind of literature is it, where did the collection we use (called the "canon") come from, by whose authority, why are there two lists of the Old Testament canon, what about translations of the bible, what aids are there to reading and understanding it, etc. This class will answer these questions and many more. You are free to ask questions that come to your mind.

#### ***Rationale/Class Overview***

During our Parish Mission, Lent 2009, Fr. Larry Richards requested that we attendees all bring a bible to the second night of his talks. Of course many people panicked because they neither had a bible, or they only had the one that gathered dust on the coffee table in a living room (Father made note NOT to bring that one!). Our St. Gregory's Bookstore provided a venue to purchase a personal copy of the bible for anyone who wished. During the Tuesday evening presentation, Father asked everybody to turn in their bibles to St. John's Gospel, chapter 6. Many people were lost; he noticed the confusion. He, if you were there, helped the group find the passage.

That made us aware that a lot of good people did not know some very fundamentals for using and reading the bible. Hence this class.

In this three-part class (Part I, Part II, and Part III), we will learn all the fundamental things about the Word of God and everything you need to know to feel comfortable reading the book.

#### ***Prerequisites***

There is no tuition, there are no exams, no grading, no classroom attendance, no textbooks, etc., for this class. This class is provided free to those who wish to learn from it. It is supported by the generosity of the parish community of the Church of St. Gregory the Great in Virginia Beach, VA.

If there is anything *similar* to a prerequisite, it would be that students should (1) complete the entire class and (2) in the required time frame of eight weeks.

## **Course Outcomes**

After this class you should be able to:

1. Feel more competent and comfortable to read the bible by yourself;
2. Know that you have enough information to understand and interpret the bible;
3. Choose a bible translation from among the Catholic translations what fits you;
4. Know the many bible study and bible reading helps that are available to you;
5. Have more than a working knowledge of the background of books of the bible;
6. Find answers to your biblical questions by yourself knowing the resources on-line that are available ;
7. Work with the different books of the bible because you will know their particular literary genre;
8. Understand why there are two Old Testament lists of books and which one we Catholics use;
9. Know the origin of the source of the canon (the books) of the bible we have today;
10. Interpret the bible, for yourself, understanding the hermeneutic--the senses--of the Church;
11. Handle the apparent contradictions in the bible;
12. Understand how to approach the difficult books of the bible, Genesis and Revelation.

## **Class Materials**

### **Required Materials**

It would seem to me that each student have **a bible** handy so that you can look up passages if you wish. It also will seem reasonable that you have a Catholic translation of the bible. We will cover some different translations available in bookstores. I use that New American bible because it is the translation we hear at every Mass we attend. There is a "New Revised" edition now available. It does not matter which edition you have.

### **Recommended Materials**

#### **Additional Reading**

*You may wish to go beyond the class and get started in a Catholic commentary on the bible:*

*Navarre Bible Commentary.* The Navarre Bible contains the text from the Revised Standard Version bible translation, with additional commentaries and explanations. This extensive project was initiated by St. Josemaria Escriva and was compiled by the University of Navarre faculty. Sources of the commentaries include: various Church documents, the writings of the Early Church Fathers and Doctors of the Church , as well as the writings from modern spiritual writers. Published by Four Courts Press Dublin, Ireland, 1999-2005. ISBN: 9781889334219. This series, in hard copy or paperback, available in single book editions is, perfect. I recommend this series in all my bible studies.

*Collegeville Bible Commentary.* Dianne Bergant & Robert J. Karris, eds. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989. Slightly simpler explanations for more general audiences; available in one large volume, or two separate volumes (OT and NT), or inexpensive individual pamphlets for each biblical book. New editions of individual pamphlets are being published as *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary* series, as of 2004.

Other good Catholic texts for basic bible understanding are:

Binz, Stephen J. *Introduction to the Bible: A Catholic Guide to Studying Scripture.* Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2007.

Fischer, James A. *Interpreting the Bible: A Simple Introduction.* New York: Paulist Press, 1996.

Mueller, Steve. *The Seeker's Guide to Reading the Bible: A Catholic View.* Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999.

Murphy, Kay. *What Every Catholic Needs to Know about the Bible: A Parish Guide to Bible Study.* San Jose: Resource Publications, 2004.

Nutting-Ralph, Margaret. *Scripture: Nourished by the Word*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.

St. Mary's Press. *Understanding the Bible: A Guide to Reading the Scriptures*. Winona: MN, 2008.

Somewhat longer introductions of books of the bible:

Montague, George T. *Understanding the Bible: A Basic Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised & expanded edition. New York: Paulist Press, 2007.

Highly Recommended Website

Fr. Felix Just, S.J., has one of the best summaries of Catholic biblical resources at <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/index.html>.

Dr. Bob has his Website where he considers much of what makes up this class. His site is a good example of applying knowledge of the bible to the teachings of the Church. You may find his Website at <http://www.catholicapologetics.org>

## ***Class Requirements and Assignments***

### ***Information and Edu 2.0 access***

As you may know, "Edu 2.0" is the commercial name for the service and server that handles our classes and your registration and enrollment. We have tried to keep your steps down to a minimum as you access the site time and time again. You need not re-register with Edu 2.0 once that has occurred. You **will** have to enroll in a new class every time you wish to study with us. It is the same as when you went to high school or college. Registering in an institution was a one-time thing. But very semester, you had to enroll in new class.

### ***Contacting the instructor***

My contact numbers, both e-mail and telephone, are listed at the top of this syllabus.

### ***Attendance and participation***

There is no requirement we can make of you to assure that our work for these classes and the good working of the Website is appreciated. Time and money are invested in you and this program. We ask that once you make a commitment to a class, that you complete it. Thank you. This is the best way for you to show your appreciation.

### ***Class Lessons (week-by-week)***

I want to let you know how I create these Internet classes. You are probably aware that I have taught many class at St. Gregory's for the past four years and for almost 28 years throughout the diocese. My customary way of teaching has been with the digital convenience is using Microsoft PowerPoint. Years ago, I used acetate overheads to present my material. PowerPoint made the presentation colorful and animated when I wanted. But, I needed to be there when an audience saw the slides. Now with another great digital creation, I am able to add my picture and voice to the PowerPoint slides as if I were live when you watch them.

I also usually created classes in a two-hour time frame (with or without a break!). To make my new presentation in two hour blocks would be unreasonable. So now I break the presentations up into shorter units. I label "Part I" the original unit (2 hours plus) and break it up into "Part Ia," "Part Ib," etc. It is also convenient for you to be able to stop my presentation (e.g., to take a phone call, answer a doorbell, etc.) and then to start it and continue. It is also very convenient for you to replay a portion of the presentation or re-view the entire presentation.

I will publish one week of PowerPoint material per week for the length of the class. That gives you a week to view the material before I publish a second part (and third, or more). Then I leave some weeks after the entire class is published for students to catch up. Classes will be taken down at the end of the period the class is listed for.

I also make available to you, the original PowerPoint slides that you can download and print. When you print PowerPoint slides, you have the opportunity to select the "slides" themselves (which prints one PowerPoint slide per printed page) or choose "handouts" and then choose how many to print on a page. I choose two frames per printed page for my St. Gregory's classes.

## ***Policies and Resources***

### **Academic Calendar/Registration Information**

My idea is to present classes in Edu 2.0 as I taught them at St. Gregory's, one or two series each fall and spring. So this is my academic calendar. As I said above, you need to register only once with Edu 2.0; you need to enroll for every class. Classes will be announced well in advance in St. Gregory's weekly bulletin. Incidentally, the bulletin is available each week on the homepage. Scroll down to the very bottom of the opening page and click where it says "click here."

### **Bookstore**

St. Gregory's Church has a bookstore managed by Mr. Bernard Hamilton. It is open at convenient times during the week and on Sundays. He carries most of the books I mention in my classes or may be able to order them for you. Check with him when you are looking for a book.

### **Regent Library**

One of the least known resources that we have as residents of Virginia Beach and environs is Regent University. The Regent University library has what is perhaps the finest collection of biblical literature and resources outside Washington, DC. And it is open to the public. Because you are not a registered student, you may not check books out, but you may use the library and its collection in convenient study carrels and comfortable reading furniture.

### ***Technical Support***

Within our own parish community, we have a very competent computer technical expert, Randy Broadwell. He is available to you for technical problems related to our Internet site, Edu 2.0, and problems accessing the site and teaching resources. He is not available to go to homes and work with personal computers. Randy may be reached at his e-mail address [RandyB@stgregorysva.org](mailto:RandyB@stgregorysva.org).