Catholic Resources and Bible Commentaries

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. [John 6:63]

When Bible study participants read a passage and raise questions and issues, it's often time to consider what scholars and Catholic teaching say about a passage. Today's scholars offer us the fruit of their studies to help us understand the meaning of the Scripture passages we read, written with different needs and readers in mind.

Many Catholic publishers offer packaged study programs that make Bible studies easy to prepare. And yet, many study groups prefer a more "do it yourself" approach that they can adapt to participants' interests. Such groups still need helpful materials when reading the Bible as part of our 2,000-year history of prayerful reflection and study. Although there are plenty of Catholic commentaries available, we offer the following shortlist of commentaries as worth considering.

Commentary	**Readability**	**Best suited for**
New Collegeville Bible Commentary	Very accessible	Beginning–intermediate
Ignatius Catholic Study Bible	Very accessible–intermediate	Beginning–intermediate
Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture	Accessible–intermediate	Most Bible study groups
Paulist Biblical Commentary	Intermediate	Intermediate–advanced
Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century	Intermediate–advanced	Serious/experienced readers
Sacra Pagina / Berit Olam	Advanced	Advanced readers, clergy, students

Perhaps everyone in the study group will purchase their own copy, but some might want another commentary for additional reading.

Stream a video. I recommend the popular and free YouTube channel of Catholic Scripture scholar, Fr. Tim Peters. He covers many books in the Bible with videos well suited for all groups and typically running at 20-30 minutes. For your first Bible study session, I recommend his 17-minute video for *Paul's letter to Philemon*. The letter is very short, needs only one video, and offers a great ice-breaker topic: friendship.



Studying the Sunday readings? *First Impressions*, by Dominican Father Jude Siciliano, offers a free pastoral commentary on the Sunday Gospel for preachers and study groups. It's posted and emailed to subscribers by Monday evening, but usually earlier. Go to: preacherexchange.com.

Jesuit Scripture scholar, Fr. Felix Just, maintains a website that is as rich a source that I have seen for whatever a Bible enthusiast might want. Go to: Catholic-Resources.org.

When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you.
When you look for me, you will find me. [Jeremiah 29:12-13]

For another perspective. A group leader needn't use either of the following as the group's regular commentary. Keep them at hand when preparing for a session. Either may offer an insight or perspective that will enrich the group's discussion:

The Jewish Annotated New Testament, co-edited by Jewish scholars Amy-Jill Levine and Mark Brettler: provides a Jewish historical and cultural context to New Testament writings and Jewish perspectives that modern Christians might miss.

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, published by InterVarsity Press: brings together what early Church bishops and leaders wrote about particular Scripture passages, especially useful for seeing how Christians in the early centuries read and understood a text.

Picking a Catholic study Bible. A good Catholic study Bible helps us study the Scripture, with the complete Catholic canon, helpful notes, introductions, and cross-references to related passages. Using the same translation can make group study easier, although comparing translations sometimes offers another angle for understanding a passage. I typically recommend the New American Bible translation heard at Mass.

> Note: A new translation, the *American Catholic Bible*, is scheduled for 2027 and will become the translation we use at Mass in the United States.

I recommend two articles to help you select a study bible:

- *How to pick a Catholic Bible*. A recently updated article that walks you through the differences between popular Catholic Bibles. Find it at Aleteia.org.
- *Best Catholic Study Bibles*. A side-by-side comparison of six Catholic study Bibles, with pros and cons as well as the purpose they are most suited for. Find it at scripturedepth.com.

When nobody has the answer. First, that's a sign that a great question has been asked, and that a study group can learn from working toward an answer together.

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: the U.S. bishops' website has an online version of the Catechism. Go to: www.usccb.org/catechism-of-the-catholic-church.
- *Have a parish connection*: check with your parish office if a knowledgeable person is available for when your study group has question.
- *USCCB:* The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website includes the Sunday/daily Mass readings and a digital Bible with cross-references, notes, and introductions. Go to usccb.org.
- *Catholic Answers* is a go-to website for many, with clear explanations for many Scripture-related questions. Its A.I. assistant can direct you to relevant articles. Go to Catholic.com.
- *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, by Scott Hahn: an accessible reference that's well-suited for Catholic study groups, addressing people, places, events, and teachings.



An A.I. assistant can help with an unanswered question. If your group has such a question, use an A.I. assistant to explore it or suggest where to look next. Be specific about what you want. For example: "In Romans 8:19–23, what does Paul mean when he says creation is groaning? Please explain from a Catholic perspective and suggest

reliable Catholic sources I can consult." Then treat the response as a starting point: ask follow-up questions and check important answers against reliable Catholic sources.