

Homily based on the readings from September 30, 2025 (Zechariah 8.20-23; Luke 9.51-56)

It is interesting how the readings at daily Mass often line up – apparently by coincidence – with the specific saints who are being commemorated. Our first reading, from the Book of Zechariah, describes how “men of every nationality, speaking different tongues” will come seeking the Lord. Today, of course, is the Memorial of Saint Jerome, one of the first four individuals to be granted the title *Doctor of the Church*. While Saint Jerome composed many important works of history and theology, he is particularly associated with one *monumental* accomplishment: he singlehandedly compiled the first comprehensive and authoritative translation of the Bible into Latin.

From a modern perspective, translating Holy Scripture from one ancient language into another might not seem especially consequential.

Nevertheless, at that time – around the beginning of the fifth century – this project was considered revolutionary. In western Europe and

northern Africa, Latin was still *overwhelmingly* the language of the common people. Saint Jerome made the Bible accessible to an entirely new population – to “men of every nationality” – who had never had the opportunity to encounter it so clearly before. All of us here today are heirs to that tradition, and are still reaping the benefits of Saint Jerome’s work so many centuries ago.

Beyond this extraordinary achievement, Saint Jerome is remembered for articulating a simple yet fundamental principle. As he wrote in his commentary on the Book of Isaiah:

For if, according to the apostle Paul, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and he who does not know Scripture does not know the power or the wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.

“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” There is a false notion – sadly common among both Catholics and non-Catholics – that the Bible is somehow less important to Catholics than it is to other Christians.

This idea is not only incorrect, but dangerous. To quote the fathers of the Second Vatican Council:

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles.

Engagement with Holy Scripture is not optional, just as receiving the Holy Eucharist is not optional. It is absolutely *fundamental* to our lives as Christians.

Our task, as individual Catholics, is always to look for ways to incorporate Scripture more deeply into our lives. Coming to Mass,

particularly daily Mass, is a good starting point – but it should not be the totality of what we do. We are blessed to have many forms of prayer – the Stations of the Cross, the Liturgy of the Hours – that are built on a Biblical bedrock. To cite one particularly important example, Pope Saint John Paul II frequently referred to the Holy Rosary as the “compendium of the Gospel.” There are opportunities for Scriptural engagement all around us, if only we are willing to seek them out.

In addition, we should never underestimate the value of reading Scripture in a disciplined and comprehensive way. Bible studies sometimes have the reputation of being a Protestant activity, but they are a vital component of Catholic life as well. In fact, I would strongly urge anyone who is available to head over the rectory at 10:00 this morning for the Bible study that takes place right here at Our Lady of Lourdes.

One of the amazing qualities of Holy Scripture is that whenever we read it, *however* we read it, there is always something new to learn – a *glimmer* of insight we might never have appreciated before. If

*ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ, then it is also true that knowledge of Scripture is knowledge of Christ.*

Saint Jerome spent decades perfecting his translation of the Bible. Few of us are called to participate in that sort of Herculean effort, but all of us are expected to grow in the knowledge of Christ every single day of our lives. God is calling out to each of us. We need to give ourselves every opportunity to listen to his voice.