

## CHRIST THE WORD

A Sermon for St. Bartholomew's Parish, Woodinville, WA  
THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

by Fr. Daniel McGrath

In our Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, reference is made to the 'holy Scriptures' which have been written for our learning, and reference is also made to God's 'holy Word'. There is here a bit of a play on words here, for by "Holy Scripture" we mean of course the Old & New Testaments of The Bible, and The Bible is a means of learning about the "Holy Word of God Incarnate", who is Jesus Christ.

The purpose of Holy Scripture is to direct our attention toward Jesus Christ. Without Him, there is no real unity of the various and sundry books of the Bible. The Old Testament tells us that Christ is coming and the New Testament tells us the Good News (Gospel) that Christ has come! Scripture was inspired by God (2 Tim. 3.16) and written by men of faith, so that we could learn about where we've been and where we are going as God's People! It tells us that there is a God who loves us, and that we have hope and a future!.

Our Church holds up Holy Scripture as a sufficient source of knowledge about our Salvation. We do not claim that Scripture is utterly inerrant in every detail, or that it may be used for other purposes: for example, as a Science Textbook, a Medical Manual, Psychiatric Manual, a Cookbook, or source of secret codes. There are groups who view the Bible in those terms, but as catholic Christians we wish to avoid making The Bible into an object of superstition. We worship the Word of God in his Incarnation, but we do not worship the word of God *written*.

How is Holy Scripture used in our Church? We use Holy Scripture first of all in *devotion*. Our Services are crafted in large part either from direct quotations of Scripture, or from Scriptural paraphrases, so we pray the words and thoughts of Scripture constantly at Church whether you realize it or not. A large portion of the Psalms and the Old & New Testament is read out at Daily Morning & Evening Prayer.

We use Holy Scripture for *instruction*. This is partly the priest's job through the Sermon at Holy Communion, (which is usually a Sermon on the Epistle or Gospel reading), and through leading the parish Bible Study. Our children learn the Stories of the Bible in Church School, they learn about Biblical morality and Christian doctrine in Confirmation Class. Each of our members is encouraged to keep reading on their own or in Study Groups. The only thing we are not free to do, is to bring forth new interpretations of Scripture based on our own opinions (2 Pet 1.20). Rather, we interpret Scripture according to the Creeds and Councils of the ancient, undivided Church. We give precedence to the ancient Church, because it was they who assembled the Bible, and it was they who proclaimed our central beliefs out of its contents. They probably did not intend The Bible to be a complete manual for understanding all of the problems of modern life; but they did succeed in imparting a letter to us, who live many hundreds of years later; a letter containing the Good News about our Salvation.

God has caused Holy Scripture to be written for our learning; the ancient Church has put it in order and set forth our beliefs from it...now we may use it and profit by it! We certainly have very good methods in place, so let's put them into practice. When was the last time you took the Bible off its shelf, blew the dust off its cover, and opened it either for Morning Prayer or Private Study? In doing so, you will certainly rediscover Jesus Christ the holy Word of God Incarnate, and receive the comfort and hope that comes from knowing and worshipping him.