

Introduction

This document is a collection of useful resources, intended for anyone wishing to deepen their understanding of God and theology, of the lives of the saints, and of how we might live closer to God, but simply might not know where to look. By applying the understanding these resources might help us gain, hopefully then we will be able to walk through the narrow gate that Christ urges us to enter.

To this end, there are three areas of focus in this document:

1. Evangelisation (Proclaiming the Word of God)
2. Worshipping God (Celebrating the Sacraments)
3. Love of Neighbour (Exercising the Ministry of Charity)

These three sections are based off of the encyclical letter “Deus Caritas Est”, in which Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

“The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”

The resources noted in this document are by no means extensive, but are simply ones that are deemed most helpful. Indeed many of these resources/pointers may be known already (which are included just to be thorough), but it is hoped that some may be new, and most importantly, useful.

1 Evangelisation (Proclaiming the Word of God)

Here is a list of resources that can help improve an understanding of God (and also our understanding of our relationship with God) through his Word and theology, in such a way that we may be able to proclaim his Word by our speech, as well as by the lives we live if we apply that understanding.

1.1 Books

1.1.1 The Bible

This is the most obvious resource, but also the most important. In the Bible is God's Word, spoken through the Prophets of ages past and the Apostles, finding finality in his eternal Word, his only Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is the most direct source for hearing what God has to say to us, and for us therefore to know Him.

However, there are more technical points in that the Old Testament was originally in Hebrew, and the New Testament was originally in Koine Greek. And so, awareness of translation is important, in that a translation may either be literal (aiming to have equivalent wording), or dynamic (aiming to have equivalent meaning regardless of wording). Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, but here are some Catholic English translations roughly in order of being more literal to less literal:

1. Revised Standard Edition Second Catholic Edition (RSV-2CE)
2. English Standard Version Catholic Edition (ESV-CE)
3. Douay–Rheims Version (DRV)

3 above uses Early Modern English, so may be harder to understand at first, but may lend more depth and literary value to the text.

4. Jerusalem Bible

All that being said, the best translation of the Bible may very well be the one you are reading already, precisely because you are simply reading the Bible, which is probably the main thing.

In the long term, it may be worth considering learning (at least some of) a classical language like Latin (easier), Koine Greek (harder), or Hebrew (much harder) to read the scripture in an original or early language, as more understanding may be reached, although it may be that a good study bible is just as useful to that end. At the very least, some loose study of particular Greek/Hebrew words would go an extremely long way.

- Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament *[each Old Testament book has its own book in the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible series]*
- The Word on Fire Bible *[each volume has different sections of the Bible]*
- A History of the Bible (John Barton) *[a Penguin book]*

1.1.2 General Theology

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church
- Introduction to Christianity (Pope Benedict XVI)
- Exploring Catholic Theology (Bishop Robert Barron)
- Light from Light (Bishop Robert Barron)
- Orthodoxy (G.K Chesterton)
- Mere Christianity (C.S. Lewis)
- The Screwtape Letters (C.S. Lewis)
- Your Life is Worth Living (Bishop Fulton Sheen)
- Victory Over Vice (Bishop Fulton Sheen)

- The Lamb's Supper (*Scott Hahn*)
- Prudence (*Fr Gregory Pine*)
- Vatican II Collection (*The Word on Fire*) [a collection and commentary of the four main documents of the Vatican II Council]

1.1.3 The Saints

- Pivotal Players (*Bishop Robert Barron*) [about several saints as well as key people in the history of the Church]
- Confessions (*St Augustine*)
- City of God (*St Augustine*)
- The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Sienna (*St Catherine of Sienna*)
- Story of a Soul (*St Therese of Lisieux*)
- Selected Philosophical Writings (*St Thomas Aquinas*) [Oxford Classics Publishing of selected works]
- Summa Theologiae (*St Thomas Aquinas*) [very large, so probably best read online via New Advent (see Websites section)]
- The Interior Castle (*St Teresa of Ávila*)
- The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius (*St Ignatius*)
- The Rule of St Benedict (*St Benedict*)

1.1.4 Church History

- History of the Catholic Church (*James Hitchcock*)
- The Ecclesiastical History of the English People (*St Bede*) [more of an interesting book, as opposed to being useful, as it was made in 731]

1.2 Websites

- Vatican Website (www.vatican.va/): The website of the Vatican. Pretty much anything the Vatican has published, should be here for free. It includes the Catechism of the Catholic

Church, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, and also all of the Second Vatican Council Documents, and much more including Papal letters and encyclicals.

- Catholic Answers (www.catholic.com): Various answers to all sorts of questions to do with Catholicism, whether theological or general.
- New Advent (www.newadvent.org): A wide collection of writings from various saints translated into English, and other collections including a parallel Bible in Koine Greek, English and Latin. Also includes an English translation of the Summa Theologiae in its entirety.
- Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org): This might seem a trivial thing to mention, but it is incredibly useful for knowing more about any theological topic, and especially in searching up any of the resources mentioned in this document.
- Theology of the Body (<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/theology-of-the-body-21271>): An online archive of all Pope Saint John Paul II's talks on the Theology of the Body.

1.3 YouTube Channels

All below are the precise names of YouTube channels.

- Bishop Robert Barron
- Word on Fire Institute
- Ascension Presents
- Pints With Aquinas
- Breaking In The Habit
- Theology of the Body Institute
- Counsel of Trent
- Reason and Theology
- Godsplaining

2 Worshipping God (Celebrating the Sacraments)

Here, there are resources to help in prayer, whether personal, or that of the Church also through its Liturgy.

2.1 Mass

- Sunday Missal: Any good Missal should serve as good preparation for Mass, as you can then read the readings of the Mass beforehand if you wish to aid depth of understanding and prayer when at Mass. Most Missals should also contain useful prayers also for before Mass.
- Order of Mass in English (*CTS Publishing*): This is a shorter Missal since it doesn't contain any of the readings, but is good for looking through during Mass to know what is happening, as it has only the key elements and responses. Also, it's £3.50.

2.2 Prayer

2.2.1 Books

- A Simple Rosary Book (*CTS Publishing*) [*a guide to praying the Rosary, also only £3.50 and portable*]
- The Rosary with Bishop Robert Barron (*Bishop Robert Barron*) [*another guide to praying the Rosary, but also with long and short readings for each of the mysteries being contemplated*]
- A Simple Prayer Book (*CTS Publishing*) [*good basic collection of prayers, from same publisher, also £3.50 and portable*]
- Liturgy of the Hours (*Collins Publishing, since they are the publisher for the Liturgy of the Hours in the UK*)

In order of shortest to largest book/set of books:

1. Shorter Morning and Evening Prayer
2. Morning and Evening Prayer
3. Daily Prayer from the Divine Office
4. The Divine Office Three Volume Set

Information on how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours can be found on many websites and on YouTube. Also, Universalis (below in the Websites section) contains the daily hours/offices of prayer for free (but a book is of course better for the long term). As a pointer for those unsure on how to start the Liturgy of the Hours, Compline is perfect (Night Prayer) since it is quite small.

- St Gregory's Prayer Book [*a pocket sized dense collection of prayers for pretty much all occasions*]
- The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary [*like a mini Liturgy of the Hours*]

2.2.2 Websites

- Liturgy Office of England and Wales (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk): Very useful for many resources, specific for those of us in England. The most important resource I think is their liturgical calendar which can be printed off, which indicates any feasts, solemnities, and memorias, which is very useful for the Liturgy of the Hours as well.
- Universalis (universalis.com): A website that tells you the readings for Mass for the day, as well as all the readings for the Liturgy of the Hours.

3 Love of Neighbour (Exercising the Ministry of Charity)

This section is far more practical in nature than the previous two, and so here there won't be any resources as such, but there will be key pointers hoped to aid fostering charity in our lives as, and via, love of our neighbours. It is worth noting here, that the ministry of 'charity' refers to the Latin term 'caritas' which more directly means 'sacrificial love' in English, hence the link to loving our neighbour as opposed to the standard definition of 'charity' today.

In order to help us in this aim, a definition/clarification on the term 'love' may be useful. Here, someone¹ talks about St Aquinas's definition of love as "to will the Good of the other":

"Of course, for Aquinas to love means to consistently will and choose the good of the other. To love neighbor as self means seeing their sharing in the good as constitutive of your own sharing in the good. To love God, whose good we cannot will strictly speaking — as He is purely actualized good itself — is to love what God loves, which, of course, is the neighbor's good. So we come full circle."

And so, with that, we might exercise the ministry of charity in our lives, trying our best to love, or, will the good of, our families, friends, (literal) neighbours, and all those who might seek our help, whether we know them or not. But, in order to do so, we arguably must orientate ourselves to be most capable of exercising that charity in situations when we can, and most importantly, should. To that end below are some pointers, which may sound (and be) simple, but that's precisely where we should start and never stop at. Needless to say, as the quote above shows, love of neighbour starts with love of God (the source of all Love), and so we must start with prayer always.

- What is the setup at home with family? Are there tasks that would lift the burden off of family members? How much attention might be given to family in talking with them?
- What about the same with friends? Might there be things you are able to do to help them if there are things troubling them?
- What about your church and parish? Would there be anything you might be able to offer to help with?
- In your local neighbourhood, are there things that might need fixing or sorting? Are there maybe people you see on the street that might benefit from some help?
- How about when thinking about your own aspirations? When you consider your career/job, might there be room to consider how it can be of service to others?
- When you are at work, would there be things that you can do to relieve pressure or assist others? Or indeed, simply anything that might make the day better for colleagues?
- How might you manage your money? How much might be best offered to others, that you may know, or also may not know? Indeed, how much should be used on yourself? Might there be things that you could do without?
- How much attention might be spent on needless things? Especially with excessive use of social media, YouTube, and the internet in general, would there be ways to cut down their usage?
- Indeed, how much attention do we give to the health of our soul to be able to duly love others? Is there a need for more regular prayer, Mass, and examination of conscience with Confession?

¹<https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/to-will-the-good-of-the-other/>