

Faith Tidbits..

*a little food for thought
and some knowledge
about your
Catholic faith*

May 2008

This monthly series will answer questions you always wondered about or questions you never even thought to ask... all about our Catholic Faith.

If you have a question you want answered, call Diane Hardick at 633-3672.

Were Catholics ever forbidden to read the Bible?

The simple answer is no. This question is asked because of a long history of half truths. The Catholic Church has long stated that "ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Christ." Scripture in the language of the people has a long Catholic history. When more and more people began to learn to read, translations of the Bible quickly emerged in Spanish, Italian, Danish, French, Norwegian, Polish, Bohemian and Hungarian ever before the invention of the printing press. Sometimes translations were undertaken without the approval of the Church, and since the Church is duty bound to prohibit incompetent translations, these translations were barred. Great and authoritative voices in the Church have always urged Catholics to intimacy with Scripture, from St. John Chrysostom in the fourth century to Pope Gregory in the sixth century to Pope Pius XII in the late 19th and early 20th century. Over the centuries, Christ working through his Church has preserved the canon of Scripture, hand-copied the manuscripts, insured the accuracy of translations and encourage its reading.

Why is there more standing at Mass than kneeling?

Standing is the most ancient of liturgical positions. It was the ordinary position at worship for almost the first thousand years of Christianity. Standing was a natural expression of respect, reverence and readiness. All religions in ancient times used this position at worship. Christianity spread its early roots in a gentile culture where kneeling was the position of servitude and slavery. Standing straight, tall and free as baptized children of God had special meaning for them. During the Eucharistic Prayer and blessings, the posture of the people was one of deep bowing. Standing, during the reading of the gospel was a tradition since ancient times because of the special dignity associated with it. Kneeling has been a popular devotional position only during modern times. There was always, however, a tradition of kneeling for prayer. Kneeling during Mass was influence by a growing emphasis placed on the divinity of Christ and the unworthiness of human persons in his presence. It eventually became so common that by 813 kneeling was considered the ordinary position of people during Mass. An exception was always made for the reading of the gospel, when the more ancient and therefore traditional position of standing continued.

Why do priests wear "funny clothes"?

Vestments became popular in the fourth century. Originally, the clergy wore what was common among middle-class people. There came a time when conservation clergy continued to wear what had passed out of fashion. The *alb* (Latin *alba*, "white") was the basic everyday garment, similar to a tunic: white for festivals and darker color for everyday use. Eventually the clergy were distinguished from the laity by the length of his tunic. Clergy wore a long one. The amice (a scarf around the neck), the cincture (a belt), the maniple (a handkerchief or napkin), the chasuble (a kind of coat) were also worn. Today, presiders usually wear only an alb and chasuble, or a combination, along with a stole. The stole, a symbol of authority, was borrowed from Roman civil life.