

New American Bible, Revised Edition

The United States' Bishops have approved a new Bible, including the first new translation of the Old Testament in over 40 years. The New American Bible, Revised Edition will be available from publishers starting March 9, 2011. The New Testament was last revised in 1986.

Background

Why did the US bishops decide to re-translate the Old Testament? What could have changed?

Relatively recent archaeological finds such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which contain Scriptural and other texts that are 1,000 years older than any other previously known manuscript, provided new insights and information about the original meaning of the Scripture. This better understanding of and context for the Old Testament led to revisions that are closer to the original text or more clearly express the meaning of the original. In addition, changes were made to better reflect modern English language usage of some words.

Divino afflante spiritu, a 1943 papal encyclical on the translation of sacred texts, requires that the best possible textual tradition to be followed. Keeping pace with the discovery and publication of new and better ancient manuscripts allows that.

Can you provide examples?

Samples of longer text changes are at the end of this document, but some words that no longer appear include “booty” (replaced with “plunder”), “cereal” (replaced with “grain”), and “holocaust” (replaced with “burnt offering”). That is because they have taken on new meanings for modern readers and could distract from the original intent of the Scripture.

Why was only the Old Testament revised? What about the New Testament?

The New Testament was revised in 1986. The Old Testament has not been revised since 1970 and the scholarship used for that translation dated back even further, to the 1950s. A significant amount of new information has become available since that time.

What was the process? Did the Vatican approve this new translation?

Translating a Bible used by millions of people is a complex process. The translation was initiated by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), a corporation at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that directs the development, publication, promotion, and distribution of the *New American Bible* and related texts. This translation then went through a second review process by a subcommittee of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine, the Subcommittee on the Translation of Scripture Text.

The CCD approved initiating a revision of the New American Bible in 1993. From 1994 to 2001, a group of eight editors and more than 50 scholars and theologians - clergy, religious and lay men and women – from over 30 institutions worked on the new translation of the Old Testament. These experts included some of the most prominent biblical and theological scholars in the world. At the same time, two editors and seven revisers separately worked exclusively on the Book of Psalms.

In this careful process, each reviser submitted changes to a single editor. The editor reviewed the text, got clarifications and then worked with a subcommittee of a Board of Editors on each section. Once the entire translation was complete, the full board of editors reviewed the full text to ensure consistency. The text next went to the five bishops on the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee on the Translation of Scripture Text, who worked with additional experts, called censors, on a review. The work was complex and, rather than simply updating a prior translation, the group went back to original Greek and Hebrew texts as the starting point. This helped ensure translations were as close to the original meaning of the manuscripts as possible. The subcommittee and board of editors then worked together to ensure the best possible rendering.

Once this process was complete, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Administrative Committee was asked to authorize the president of the USCCB to grant a canonical rescript, or permission, permitting publication.

The process did not involve the Holy See since its staff typically only reviews and approves translations of Scripture that are intended for use in the liturgy, which this edition is not at this time. If, in the future, the U.S. bishops approve this translation of the Old Testament for use in the liturgy, the text will be submitted to the Holy See for approval.

The New Bible and the Mass

Will this new translation be used at Mass?

Not at this time. The Lectionary, or book of Scripture readings used for Mass, will continue to be based on earlier translations: the 1970 New American Bible Old Testament and the 1986 New American Bible New Testament. The *New American Bible, Revised Edition* (NABRE), released in March 2011, is designed for non-liturgical use, such as private or group prayer, though the U.S. bishops could, in the future, choose to approve it for use in the liturgy. That would require an additional review and editing process, including approval by the Holy See.

Is the release of the new Bible related to the new Roman Missal that U.S. Catholic churches will start using in Advent 2011?

No, though both are coming out this year. The Roman Missal includes revisions to the prayers the people and the priest say during Mass. Scripture readings for Mass are in the Lectionary, which is not changing at this time. As a result of the new Roman Missal, the prayers at Mass will better connect with the Lectionary, or Scripture readings, since many of the prayers allude to Biblical texts and now will align more closely with the meaning of original texts.

Availability of the New Bible

When will the new Bible be available?

The *New American Bible, Revised Edition* will be released for the first time on March 9, 2011 – Ash Wednesday - through a number of publishers, with more releasing print and e-book editions and study texts in the coming months. Over 16 publishers have been approved to release editions of the new Bible. A regularly updated list of licensed publishers will be posted at www.usccb.org/nab. The new Bible may be pre-ordered at local booksellers, online at www.amazon.com and directly at publisher websites.

Will it be available online?

Yes. The complete text of the *New American Bible, revised edition* will be posted at www.usccb.org/nab/ in the near future.

You also can learn more about NABRE on its Facebook page: New American Bible Revised Edition.

Where is the New American Bible used?

The New American Bible is used throughout the United States, the Philippines, India, South Korea, and the English-speaking countries of Africa. It is used in the liturgy (1970 edition of the Old Testament), in catechetical instruction, and in private readings and devotion.

Catholics and the Bible

Can Catholics still read their old Bible?

Yes, but the new translation may help readers come to a deeper and richer understanding of the meaning of God's Word because the text is clearer.

How is a Catholic Bible different from Jewish or Protestant Bibles?

Catholic Bibles include seven Old Testament books that are not in Protestant and Jewish Bibles - Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach (also called the Wisdom of Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch – as well as sections of the Books of Esther and Daniel. These books are called the deuterocanonical books. The Catholic Church considers these books to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and they have been part of the canon (list of books) of Scripture from the early centuries of the Church.

Catholics are not known for reading Scripture. Are the bishops trying to change that?

Despite the common perception that Catholics don't read the Bible, they are encouraged to do so, including the Old Testament. In fact, the bishops at the Second Vatican Council strongly encouraged all the faithful to read Scripture frequently, to listen carefully to the Scripture proclaimed at Mass, and to take advantage of catechetical programs that will help them gain a better understanding of God's word (cf. *Dei Verbum* 25). As Saint Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." (St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii* prol.: PL 24, 17b)

As Pope Benedict recently wrote in the apostolic exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, "The word of God is at the basis of all authentic Christian spirituality. The Synod Fathers thus took up the words of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*: 'Let the faithful go gladly to the sacred text itself, whether in the sacred liturgy, which is full of the divine words, or in devout reading, or in such suitable exercises and various other helps which, with the approval and guidance of the pastors of the Church, are happily spreading everywhere in our day. Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture.'" (291)

How is the Old Testament relevant to Catholics?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it well:

The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, (cf. *Dei Verbum* [DV] 14) for the Old Covenant has never been revoked.

Indeed, "the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men" (DV 15). "Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional," (DV 15) the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's saving love: these

writings "are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way" (DV 15).

Christians venerate the Old Testament as true Word of God (CCC, 121-123).

Sample Changes in the New American Bible, Revised Edition

Does this Bible use inclusive language?

This edition reflects the original meaning of the texts. Much of the original material, especially in the narrative books, was gender specific and remains so. All references to God retain the traditional use of masculine pronouns. Where the original reference was gender neutral, the translation reflects that.

What are the changes?

The content is not changing so all of the favorite Old Testament stories remain, though some of the words may be different. Specific texts were revised for one of three reasons: to be closer to the original text, to more clearly express the meaning of the original, and to better reflect modern English language usage.

What are some examples?

To be closer to the original text: Sirach 4:11-19 and Sirach 51:1-4a

Old Text	Revised Text
<p>Sirach 4:11-19 Wisdom instructs her children and admonishes those who seek her. He who loves her loves life; those who seek her out win her favor. He who holds her fast inherits glory; wherever he dwells, the LORD bestows blessings. Those who serve her serve the Holy One; those who love her the LORD loves. He who obeys her judges nations; he who hearkens to her dwells in her inmost chambers. If one trusts her, he will possess her; his descendants too will inherit her. She walks with him as a stranger, and at first she puts him to the test; Fear and dread she brings upon him and tries him with her discipline; With her precepts she puts him to the proof, until his heart is fully with her. Then she comes back to bring him happiness and reveal her secrets to him. But if he fails her, she will abandon him and deliver him into the hands of despoilers.</p>	<p>Sirach 4:11-19 Wisdom teaches her children and admonishes all who can understand her. Those who love her love life; those who seek her out win the LORD's favor. Those who hold her fast will attain glory, and they shall abide in the blessing of the LORD. Those who serve her serve the Holy One; those who love her the Lord loves. "Whoever obeys me will judge nations; whoever listens to me will dwell in my inmost chambers. If they remain faithful, they will possess me; their descendants too will inherit me. "I will walk with them in disguise, and at first I will test them with trials. Fear and dread I will bring upon them and I will discipline them with my constraints. When their hearts are fully with me, then I will set them again on the straight path and reveal my secrets to them. But if they turn away from me, I will abandon them and deliver them over to robbers."</p>

Sirach 51:1-4a

I give you thanks, O God of my father;
I praise you, O God my savior!
I will make known your name, refuge of my life;
you have been my helper against my
adversaries.
You have saved me from death,
and kept back my body from the pit,
From the clutches of the nether world you have snatched
my feet;
you have delivered me, in your great mercy
From the scourge of a slanderous tongue,
and from lips that went over to falsehood;
From the snare of those who watched for my downfall,
and from the power of those who sought my
life;
From many a danger you have saved me,
from flames that hemmed me in on every side.

Sirach 51: 1-4a

I give you thanks, LORD and King,
I praise you, God my savior!
I declare your name, refuge of my life,
because you have ransomed my life from death;
You held back my body from the pit,
and delivered my foot from the power of Sheol.
You have preserved me from the scourge of the
slanderous tongue,
and from the lips of those who went over to
falsehood.
You were with me against those who rise up against
me;
You have rescued me according to your
abundant mercy
From the snare of those who look for my downfall,
and from the power of those who seek my life.
From many dangers you have saved me,
from flames that beset me on every side.

To more clearly express the meaning of the original: Joel 3:1-5 and Micah 6:8

Old Text	Revised Text
<p>Joel 3:1-5 Then afterward I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; Even upon the servants and the handmaids, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.</p> <p>And I will work wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke; The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, At the coming of the Day of the LORD, the great and terrible day. Then everyone shall be rescued who calls on the name of the LORD; For on Mount Zion there shall be a remnant, as the LORD has said, And in Jerusalem survivors whom the LORD shall call.</p>	<p>Joel 3:1-5 It shall come to pass I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even upon your male and female servants, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.</p> <p>I will set signs in the heavens and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke; The sun will darken, the moon turn blood-red, Before the day of the LORD arrives, that great and terrible day. Then everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD will escape harm. For on Mount Zion there will be a remnant, as the LORD has said, And in Jerusalem survivors whom the LORD will summon.</p>
<p>Micah 6:8 You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.</p>	<p>Micah 6:8 You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.</p>

To better reflect modern English usage Leviticus 2:1 and Isaiah 49:24-25

Old Text	Revised Text
<p>Leviticus 2:1 When anyone wishes to bring a cereal offering to the LORD, his offering must consist of fine flour.</p>	<p>Leviticus 2:1: When anyone brings a grain offering to the LORD, the offering must consist of bran flour.</p>
<p>Isaiah 49:24-25 Thus says the LORD: Can booty be taken from a warrior? or captives be rescued from a tyrant? Yes, captives can be taken from a warrior, and booty be rescued from a tyrant; Those who oppose you I will oppose, and your sons I will save.</p>	<p>Isaiah 49:24-25 Can plunder be taken from a warrior, or captives rescued from a tyrant? Thus says the LORD: Yes, captives can be taken from a warrior, and plunder rescued from a tyrant; Those who oppose you I will oppose, and your sons I will save.</p>