

Spiritual Reading to Turn Up the Flame

by Fr. Mike Van Sloun

CEUs. On-going education is critical in the professional world. Even after a person has gone to college and earned an advanced degree, teachers, health care workers, and many others are required to earn "Continuing Education Units" to review, refresh, or update what they have learned to stay sharp in their field.

An Alive and Growing Faith. If continuing education is important in the professional world, it is even more important in the spiritual world. Unfortunately, for many Catholics, formal religious education ends with their last Confirmation class, and other than the Sunday homily, sadly, ongoing learning and faith formation often does not get much attention. Spiritual reading is a key ingredient to keeping one's faith alive and growing.

Sacred Scripture. The most important book ever written, the one book that should get the most attention in our spiritual reading is the Bible. Scripture reading is the way to learn more about God and stay close to God. Ideally, we should spend at least a few minutes every day reading the Bible. Every Catholic should have a Bible in their home, and the recommended edition is ***The New American Bible (NAB)***. The NAB has an excellent introduction to each book, plus many footnotes and cross references. For further explanation, another excellent option is the ***Catholic Study Bible***.

Bible Resources. The meaning of the Bible is not self-evident, so it is useful to have a Bible commentary which provides additional explanation. Also, there are a number of books available on *Lectio divina*, how to pray with the Bible.

Catholic Doctrine. The single best compendium of Church teaching is the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***. It is an indispensable reference book.

Periodicals. There are many Catholic newspapers and magazines intended to inform and strengthen our faith. ***The Catholic Spirit*** is our archdiocesan newspaper. Family-friendly magazines include ***The St. Anthony Messenger***, ***Liguorian***, ***U.S. Catholic***, and ***Our Sunday Visitor***.

Inspiration for Christian Living. The saints hold a special place of honor in our Catholic tradition, and when we read about how they lived good and holy lives, we are inspired to greater holiness ourselves. The old favorite is ***Butler's Lives of the Saints***; the most concise and accurate summary is Father Richard McBrien's ***Lives of the Saints***; and an excellent book on the feasts of the saints throughout the liturgical year is Enzo Lodi's ***Saints of the Roman Calendar***. Also, there are numerous biographies on individual saints.

Endless Options. There are many, many other spiritual books available. Pope Benedict XVI has two best selling, highly-recommended books, ***Jesus of Nazareth*** and ***The Apostles***. Pope John Paul II also published a number of books, including the highly acclaimed ***Gift and Mystery*** and ***Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way***

Stop in Stephen's Marketplace to check out the selection of resources. Please, set aside some time for spiritual reading. It does much to foster spiritual growth.