



# Why Dominican?

## **Presentation Notes for Candidacy Module 6: The Dominican Approach to Sacred Scripture and Tradition**

**Objectives:** At the end of this session, the Candidate will be able to:

1. Understand more fully that together Sacred Scripture and Tradition account for the body of Truth proclaimed by the Catholic Church.
2. Enter into a discussion about the role of infallibility in the teachings of the Church in an informed way.
3. Develop an understanding of the term “spirituality of the Word of God”.
4. Understand that there are many sources of the Word of God and that Dominicans use all of them and place a particular value on Sacred Scripture in their preaching.
5. Listen more attentively to the Word of God in Scripture.
6. Develop effective questioning and tools to examine a biblical passage.
7. Expand one’s sense of the “spirituality of the preacher”.
8. Feel more comfortable using some common ways to analyze Scripture.
9. Expand one’s sense of analyzing Scripture as part of the first steps in developing a preaching about a particular biblical text.
10. Expand one’s sense of using Scripture as a personal tool for one’s own spiritual growth.

**Materials:** chalk/chalk board or poster board/markers, copies of the same version/translation of the Bible

**Prayer/Contemplation:** Psalm 119: 105

Note: While it is important to include the first two objectives of this module, it is crucial to insure sufficient time for the practice activity/activities and sharing at the end of the session. If the discussion begins to center around or return to doctrinal issues, the presenter(s) should re-focus the group and determine a mutually convenient date and time for a later discussion of those topics.

## Study:

1. Begin the discussion by asking the candidates to describe their first remembrances of studying Scripture. Some of these prompts can be used:
  - a. Did anyone memorize scripture verses as a child?
  - b. Did anyone take a course on Scripture as part of his/her early schooling, or in college, or as part of a Bible study group at a church?
  - c. Has anyone participated in personal Bible study on-line or via other forms of media?
  - d. Did anyone have the benefit of someone helping to make Scripture “come alive” for them?

Keep notes about particular people and resources that might be used later in this module as well as in the module “Study and the Passion for Preaching”.

2. Briefly discuss the New Testament beginnings as oral tradition when the teachings of Jesus were handed down orally from the Apostles rather than written as they were happening. The presenters should review some basic Church history themselves concerning the Old Testament and the different number of books in the Catholic vs. Protestant Bibles. Do not dwell on the differences in the discussion, however.
3. Mention such terms as the teaching authority of the Church, infallibility, literalism, fundamentalism, etc. as they support the primary aim of the discussion which is that Sacred Scripture and Tradition are essential ways that God reveals Himself to us.
4. Discuss the term “spirituality of the Word” as the needed mind set or philosophy of a preacher.
5. List the 9 sources of the Word of God in our midst as described on pages 11-12 in *I Put My Words in Your Mouth*. Invite any volunteers to share a particular time in which they might have had a new recognition of God from one of these sources.

**Note:** In-depth preparation by the presenters is necessary before the actual study session in order to realize the full effectiveness of working together to analyze a biblical text. The presenters may want to consult with their parish priest about particularly useful “homily helps” that give historical background of the readings. There are also some references listed in the Resources section or the module on “Study and the Passion for Preaching”. Presenters should review both the previous week’s Sunday readings and the upcoming week’s Sunday readings and select the set of readings that would be the

easier of the two to analyze. Select one particular text to be analyzed together; usually there is more available commentary on and familiarity with the Gospel reading, but any of the three Sunday readings are appropriate.

6. Have a volunteer read the selection slowly while everyone else listens attentively but does not read along to follow the printed version.
7. After a brief time of silence, ask the participants to look at their print version and skim the reading themselves quietly.
8. Engage the group in “entering into the heart of the biblical text” as fr. Brian suggests (p. 21). List these questions on the board or poster. Probe them collectively:
9. What does the text say? Consider particular word choices.
  - a. What does the text do? Consider the purpose of this selection.
  - b. Who appears in the text?
  - c. Who is absent from the text?
  - d. What symbols appear in the text? Consider pertinent nouns, action words, numbers, adjectives, and adverbs.
  - e. Where is the Good News? Consider how God is present and the message we are given.
10. The next step in the analysis is to place the text into its biblical context. Ask the participants to skim the introduction to the book of the Bible in which this text appears as well as any footnotes. All should be using the same translation if possible.
11. Discuss the biblical context of the selection by answering the following questions based on those suggested by fr. Brian (p. 26-31):
  - a. Where in the biblical book is this text found? Consider what precedes it in that book.
  - b. What is the historical context of this book? Consider the purpose for which it was written.
  - c. What is the literary context of the book? It is appropriate to include comments from other readings about literalism and fundamentalism at this point.
  - d. What is the theological context? Consider the author’s audience.
  - e. How does this text “fit” within the rest of the book or Gospel?
  - f. Where is the saving action of God in this text?

- g. What information can parallel texts and footnotes give us to help understand the text?

**Note:** The purpose of this module is to present ways in which the participants can understand the text better. Once a method has been presented, a choice can be made as to the direction to follow. In this module, the direction is to use that information for personal growth. Another direction is to prepare a preaching, but that will be addressed in a future module.

12. Ask the participants to re-read the text silently.
13. List some questions on the board or a poster based on Fr. Gula's suggestions for praying with Scripture. They might include:
  - a. How do I view the Lord in this scene? Consider the setting and the characters.
  - b. Where am I in this story? Consider your personal feelings and needs.
14. Ask the participants to reflect on these questions and to engage in a silent dialogue with the Lord.
15. Volunteers can share their thoughts about either an important general message from the text or, more personally, a message more directed to them, as their comfort level dictates. There are no correct or incorrect answers!
16. Conclude this study session by suggesting that interested participants join or start a weekly Scripture group to analyze the upcoming week's Sunday's readings. If that is not possible, encourage the participants to spend some time each week privately to analyze the Scriptures, at least the Gospel, that will be proclaimed each following Sunday, and to pray with the Scriptures as often as possible.

**Community:** Collaboration and encouraging one another's efforts while probing and contemplating scriptural texts as preliminary steps toward preaching are essential ways of building a strong community. Uniformity is not the goal of a Dominican community; those in a Dominican community aim to blend the various opinions of its members rather than discard or stifle opposing views. Tolerance and a non-judgmental attitude toward one another foster a true and lasting spirit of community. It is important to realize that respectful discussions lead to a better human understanding of the Divine Who is still at work in our daily lives. The Spirit is always and forever helping us to discover more and more of the Truth, usually little by little. Keep in mind that controversy is a positive challenge, especially for Dominicans, to flesh out the Truth that can be found, at least partially, within all perspectives on an issue.

**Apostolate:** Be sure to mention that this type of analyzing of a text is a crucial step in preaching but not the final one.

**Follow-up:** Note that moving forward with a text to preparing a preaching will be continued with a different text in the future module “Study and the Passion for Preaching”.

**Assignment:** Distribute the Study Guide for the next study session.