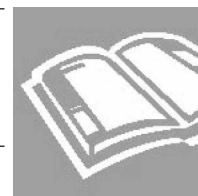


Opening the Gift of Scripture

for Deanery Groups



The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge secret emotions and thoughts.

Hebrews 4:12

Our society has changed rapidly and radically over the last few decades. It has become a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society of many beliefs and none. Core values which had remained stable for centuries have been questioned. While so many people display responsibility and generosity in their lives, for others pleasure and possessions, selfishness and power have become life's aims. Techniques of communication have brought extraordinary advantages and possibilities, but this has led to a saturation of words and a crisis in distinguishing what is true, good and lasting from what is false, deceptive and ephemeral. In the words of the prophet Amos, there is 'a famine of hearing the words of the Lord' (Amos 8:11). The Scriptures offer us a way which is trustworthy, a way both ancient and new. They contain the challenge of the Christian vocation. They show us how to foster communities in which each person is respected and loved. They challenge us to live in a self-giving rather than self-centred way. *Dei Verbum* repeatedly stresses that it is out of love that God speaks to people (*Dei Verbum* 2, 14, 21). This God of love invites us in the Scriptures to build communion with each other, as we experience communion 'with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3).

The Gift of Scripture 71

Some Questions for Discussion

1. What signs can you discern of the faithful's fruitful use of the scriptures
 - a. in private reading and reflection?
 - b. in prayer?
 - c. as a guide for faithful living?
2. What challenges exist to people's authentic reading of scripture?
 - a. How are these addressed in the local Church?
3. What particular assistance in reading/ understanding and engaging with the scriptures is presently provided for parish ministers of the word (e.g. clergy, catechists, readers, psalmists, musicians, lay leaders of worship and lay preachers)?
 - a. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the present provision?
 - b. What steps might be taken to build on the strengths and address any weaknesses?
4. What role can you see for *The Gift of Scripture* in your Deanery?