



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 3 August 2011

[Video]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very glad to see you here in the square at Castel Gandolfo and to resume the audiences after the interval in July. I would like to continue with the subject we have embarked on, that is, a “school of prayer”, and today, in a slightly different way and without straying from this theme, I would also like to mention certain spiritual and concrete aspects which seem to me useful, not only for those who — in one part of the world — are spending their summer holidays like us, but also for all who are involved in daily work.

When we have a break from our activities, especially in the holidays, we often take up a book we want to read. It is on this very aspect that I would first like to reflect today.

Each one of us needs time and space for recollection, meditation and calmness.... Thanks be to God that this is so! In fact, this need tells us that we are not made for work alone, but also to think, to reflect or even simply to follow with our minds and our hearts a tale, a story in which to immerse ourselves, in a certain sense “to lose ourselves” to find ourselves subsequently enriched.

Of course, many of these books to read, which we take in our hands during our vacation are at best an escape, and this is normal. Yet various people, particularly if they have more time in which to take a break and to relax, devote themselves to something more demanding.

I would therefore like to make a suggestion: why not discover some of the books of the Bible which are not commonly well known? Or those from which we heard certain passages in the liturgy but which we never read in their entirety? Indeed, many Christians never read the Bible and have a very limited and superficial knowledge of it. The Bible, as the name says, is a collection of books, a small “library” that came into being in the course of a millennium.

Some of these “small books” of which it is composed are almost unknown to the majority, even people who are good Christians.

Some are very short, such as the Book of Tobit, a tale that contains a lofty sense of family and marriage; or the Book of Esther, in which the Jewish Queen saves her people from extermination with her faith and prayer; or the Book of Ruth, a stranger who meets God and experiences his providence, which is even shorter. These little books can be read in an hour. More demanding and true masterpieces are the Book of Job, which faces the great problem of innocent suffering; Ecclesiastes is striking because of the disconcerting modernity with which it calls into question the meaning of life and of the world; and the Song of Songs, a wonderful symbolic poem of human love. As you see, these are all books of the Old Testament. And what about the New? The New Testament is of course better known and its literary genres are less diversified. Yet the beauty of reading a Gospel at one sitting must be discovered, just as I also recommend the Acts of the Apostles, or one of the Letters.

To conclude, dear friends, today I would like to suggest that you keep the Holy Bible within reach, during the summer period or in your breaks, in order to enjoy it in a new way by reading some of its books straight through, those that are less known and also the most famous, such as the Gospels, but without putting them down.

By so doing moments of relaxation can become in addition to a cultural enrichment also an enrichment of the spirit which is capable of fostering the knowledge of God and dialogue with him, prayer. And this seems to be a splendid holiday occupation: to take a book of the Bible in order to have a little relaxation and at the same time to enter the great realm of the word of God and to deepen our contact with the Eternal One, as the very purpose of the free time that the Lord gives us.

To special groups:

I greet all the English-speaking visitors present today, including the groups from the United States of America and from the Islands of the Caribbean and Mauritius. My special greeting goes to the young people from Australia and the Japanese pilgrims from Nagasaki. During these summer days, many of us find time to enjoy reading a good book. Today I would like to suggest reading through one of the many books of the Bible, as a way of appreciating the beauty of God’s word

and thus growing in knowledge and love of him. May the Lord bless you and your families with wisdom, joy and peace!

Lastly, I greet the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. Dear friends, may the light of Christ always illuminate your lives and bring goodness to fruition in them. Thank you for your attention. I wish you a good day.

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