



The Holy See

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO A DELEGATION OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

*Study of the Paul VI Hall
Wednesday, 31 October 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you cordially and I thank you for your visit. In expressing gratitude for the work of the American Bible Society, I encourage you to pursue and even intensify your commitment, as stated in your mission statement, “to transform lives through God’s word”. Truly the word of God has the power to transform lives, for it is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword... to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (*Heb 4:12*). Recalling these words of the Letter to the Hebrews, I offer my prayerful good wishes to all of you who have come to Rome this year for your annual retreat, centred precisely on the power of God’s word.

That word is *living and active*. At the very beginning of creation, God spoke and the world came to be (cf. *Gen 1:6-7*). In the fullness of time, Jesus gave us words that are “spirit and life” (*Jn 6:63*). By his word, he restored broken hearts, as in the case of Zacchaeus and the tax collector Matthew, to whom “he said, ‘Follow me’. And he got up and followed him” (*Mt 9:9*). In these coming days, praying with the Scriptures, you will be able to experience anew the effectiveness of that word: it does not return empty, but accomplishes the purpose for which it was given (cf. *Is 55:10-11*). It is my hope that you will always receive the Bible in its precious uniqueness: as a word that, imbued with the Holy Spirit the Giver of life, communicates to us Jesus, who is life (cf. *Jn 14:6*), and thus makes our lives fruitful. No other book has the same power. In its word, we recognize the Spirit who inspired it: for only in the Spirit can Scripture truly be received, lived and proclaimed, for the Spirit teaches all things and reminds us of all that Jesus said (cf. *Jn 14:26*).

God’s word is *sharp*. It is honey, offering the comforting sweetness of the Lord, but also a sword

bringing a salutary unrest to our hearts (cf. *Rev* 10:10). For it penetrates to the depths and brings to light the dark recesses of the soul. As it penetrates, it purifies. The double edge of this “sword” may at first wound, but it proves beneficial, for it cuts away everything that distances us from God and his love. I pray that, through the Bible, you will taste and feel deep within yourselves the Lord’s tender love and his healing presence, which searches us and knows us (cf. *Ps* 139:1).

Finally, God’s word *judges thoughts and intentions*. The word of life is also truth (cf. *Jn* 14:6), and his word “creates” truth in us, dissipating every form of falsehood and duplicity. Scripture constantly challenges us to redirect our path to God. Letting ourselves “be read” by the word of God thus enables us to become in turn “open books”, living reflections of the saving word, witnesses of Jesus and proclaimers of his newness. For the word of God always brings newness; it is elusive and often breaks through our own plans and preconceptions.

Dear friends, I offer you my prayerful good wishes that at the conclusion of these days you can renew your dedication to the service of the Bible for the benefit of so many brothers and sisters. I thank you and I ask you to remember me in your prayers. Thank you.