

# SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

July 7, 2024

Newsletter no. 225

In last week's newsletter we interrupted the series of discussions on the Bible that began in early June in order to provide some information about the summer schedule here at St. Joseph's. Up to the point just before that, we had discussed very briefly the Bible's composition, its languages, and the concept of biblical inspiration. This week, by way of returning to our reflections on the Bible, we should treat a question of central importance: How did the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT), as we know them today, come to be seen as inspired and authoritative? How was the canon—a word that refers here to a recognized body of works, like the books of the OT and the NT—established?

How the OT came to be accepted in Jewish tradition as canonical involved a long and gradual process. (For the Jews, of course, what Christians know as the OT was simply Scripture; for them there was no NT that would have made the OT “old.”) Bit by bit, over the centuries, the various books of the OT were acknowledged as inspired by God. There seems to have been no formal act of recognition that occurred at a particular moment, although by the end of the second century AD the OT canon was set. However, the Jewish canon did not, and does not, include books that appear in the Greek translation of the OT, known as the Septuagint (discussed in the June 16<sup>th</sup> newsletter), but that do not appear in the OT's original Hebrew.

It is understandable that the establishment of the OT canon took so long; after all, it took nearly a millennium for the OT to be produced. Importantly, the Jews did not have a universally recognized authority to declare that such and such writings were canonical and others were not, but over time the OT, more or less in its current form, came to be recognized as the word of God. The closest analogy might be in the area of literature. Thus, for instance, Shakespeare and Milton and Dickens belong to the canon not only of English but even of world literature. No central authority put them there, and no vote was taken, but there was just a widespread and gradual understanding that they *should* be in the canon. Much the same was the case with the OT.

The NT, on the other hand, took at most one century to produce, from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, written toward the middle of the first century, to the Second Epistle of St. Peter, probably written in the second quarter of the second century. The four Gospels and the epistles of St. Paul were accepted as canonical relatively soon after they were composed. Other parts of the NT took longer to be accepted, and the Book of Revelation, otherwise known as the Apocalypse, was not universally viewed as canonical in the wider Church until the end of the fourth century. Thanks to ancient lists of NT books, the oldest of which goes back to the second half of the second century, and to statements concerning the books of the NT that were published by church councils in the fourth century, we have a good sense of the NT's reception by the early Christian community.

There are two terms that should be explained here; one of them is “books,” and the other is “reception.”: In these short essays I have been referring to the writings of the OT and the NT as books. However, they are not books in the way that we usually speak of books today, since a few of them in the OT and all of them in the NT are only a few pages long; in fact, the Second and Third Epistles of John, both in the NT, are each less than a page long. But for centuries the custom has been to call them “books,” and I have simply followed that custom. “Reception,” on the other hand, has to do with what I have been specifically talking about in this essay. It means “acceptance,” “recognition,” “acknowledgment.” And so, “reception” refers to the Christian community's receiving the books of the OT and the NT—accepting them as inspired and recognizing them as canonical. There is all the difference in the world between something's composition and its reception. For all of the hundreds of millions of writings that have been composed in humankind's history, only a small portion has been “received”—that is, only a small portion has been recognized by a general consensus as having unique and outstanding qualities. Among them, for example, are Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Goethe's *Faust* and, on another level entirely, the Bible.

Father Boniface

## Mass intentions for the period from July 6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>

### Saturday-Sunday, July 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

4:00 pm: Jimmy Quinn (D)  
8:00 am: Megan, Matt, Sarah and Ryan (L)  
10:00 am (German): St. Joseph's Parishioners  
12:00 noon: Jack Juncaj and Family (L)  
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Barbara Kovács (D)  
6:00 pm: In Thanksgiving to Jesus

### Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am: Joanne Carter (D)  
12:15 pm: Mark William Crandall (L)

### Tuesday, July 9<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Eleanor Cobert (D), Birthday

### Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am: In Thanksgiving to God  
12:15 pm: John Timlin (D)

### Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Paul Eisler and Family (L)

### Friday, July 12<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am: Jeanne Waldmann (L)  
12:15 pm: Christine Woolcock Dettor (D)

### Saturday, July 13<sup>th</sup>

8:00 am: Vicky Thacke (D)  
12:15 pm: Virginia Renta (D)  
4:00 pm: In Thanksgiving to St. Joseph

### Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup>

8:00 am: Virginia Taylor (D)  
10:00 am: Mitzi and Bernhard Purk (D)  
12:00 noon: Robert Camaj and Family (L)  
2:00 pm (Hungarian): The Deceased Members of the Steiger Family  
6:00 pm: St. Joseph's Parishioners