

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

June 16, 2024

Newsletter no. 222

In last week's newsletter we began a discussion of the Bible that will eventually cover each of the Bible's more than seventy books in both the Old and New Testaments. We started by saying something very briefly about how and when the Bible was composed. It included a few words about the oral (and perhaps even written) tradition that preceded the actual composition of the books of the Bible as we know them today. Putting the Old Testament (OT) into its present form was a process that extended over as much as a millennium, whereas it probably took no more than a century to do the same for the New Testament (NT). With that as a quick background, let us look at the written languages associated with the Bible.

The OT was originally written in Hebrew, except for a few parts that have come down to us in Aramaic, a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. During the third and second centuries B.C. the entire OT was translated from Hebrew (and Aramaic) into Greek, which was the common language of educated people in the vast region of the eastern Mediterranean, including the Jewish diaspora. This first Greek version of the OT, followed later by several others, is called the Septuagint, from the Latin word for "seventy," because, according to legend, it was put together by seventy or seventy-two translators. The complete Septuagint includes several books that were not in the original Hebrew and hence are not recognized by the majority of Jewish scholars. Most Protestant Bibles do not include them with the other OT books but sometimes put them in a separate category called "apocrypha," from a Greek word referring to things that are obscure and questionable. However, Catholic and Orthodox Bibles accept these books as authentic. Interestingly, when the writers of the NT quote the OT, as they do about 300 times, they mostly quote the Septuagint version rather than the Hebrew; in the Gospels Jesus himself is portrayed as using the Septuagint translation when citing the OT.

This brings us to the NT, which was written entirely in Greek, although it occasionally uses Hebrew and Aramaic words and phrases. The common language of the Jews of Jesus' time who lived in Palestine, as distinct from the Greek-speaking Jewish diaspora, was Aramaic. The Gospels were undoubtedly written in Greek so that they would be understood by as many people as possible, Jews and gentiles alike. That is why Jesus is pictured as a Greek-speaker, although he probably spoke Aramaic and had at best a scant knowledge of Greek.

As Latin gradually overtook Greek as the common language of the western Mediterranean world, the OT and the NT began to be translated into Latin. The oldest Latin version that has survived is called (unsurprisingly) the Old Latin, which must have been translated in the second and third centuries. What has come down to us from the Old Latin was the work of many different translators and is incomplete, and what we have of the OT was translated into Latin from the Greek of the Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew original. Around the end of the fourth century another Latin translation appeared, called the Vulgate, which derives from the Latin *vulgus*, meaning "common"; the Vulgate, in other words, was the Bible translated into the common language of the Latin-speaking world. St. Jerome, the great biblical scholar who died c. 420, is ordinarily credited with producing the Vulgate, but in fact, like the Septuagint and the Old Latin, it owed its existence to several translators, although Jerome contributed the major part. Among the most important aspects of the Vulgate was that its version of the OT was translated not from the Greek but from the original Hebrew. In the Roman Catholic Church the Vulgate has always occupied an honored place.

If the Bible could be translated into languages like Greek (e.g., the Septuagint) and Latin (e.g., the Vulgate), it could be translated into other languages as well, both ancient and modern. In some notable cases, translations of the Bible helped to shape the very languages into which it was translated. Thus, Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German in the early sixteenth century contributed to creating the modern German language, just as the King James Bible, translated at the beginning of the seventeenth century, had an influence on the development of the English language that was at least equal to Shakespeare's. And perhaps even more remarkable, the Armenian alphabet was invented in the fifth century precisely so that the Bible could be translated into Armenian—one of several instances of a written language having been created so that the Bible could be translated into it.

This series on the Bible will continue in next week's newsletter.

This coming Wednesday, June 19th, is Juneteenth, a federal holiday. To mark the holiday, the church will be closed soon after the 12:15 Mass, and the rectory will be closed all day.

Father Boniface

Mass intentions for the period from June 15th to 23rd

Saturday-Sunday, June 15th-16th (Father's Day)

4:00 pm:	Kathleen O'Malley (L)
8:00 am:	Giacomo Rodorigo (D)
10:00 am:	Francisca and Fundador Santiago (D)
12:00 noon:	Frank and Rose Christoforo (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian):	The Deceased Members of the Hangyal and Weisz Families
6:00 pm:	St. Joseph's Parishioners

Monday, June 17th

7:00 am:	Rosemary Pepeccino (D)
12:15 pm:	Mary Keane (L)

Tuesday, June 18th

7:00 am:	In Thanksgiving to God
12:15 pm:	Rich Bartash (D)

Wednesday, June 19th (Juneteenth)

7:00 am:	Mouhebat Sobhani (D)
12:15 pm:	Eleanor and Joseph Cobert (D), Wedding Anniversary

Thursday, June 20th

7:00 am:	
12:15 pm:	LeRoy Neiman (D)

Friday, June 21st

7:00 am:	
12:15 pm:	Mimi Aliperti (D)

Saturday, June 22nd

8:00 am:	
12:15 pm:	Emmanuel Balcos (D)
4:00 pm:	Eileen Castello (D)

Sunday, June 23rd

8:00 am:	St. Joseph's Parishioners
10:00 am:	Dorothy Ehmser (D)
12:00 noon:	Michael LoCicero (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian):	Katarine Gerencser (D)
6:00 pm:	In Thanksgiving to Jesus