

# SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

June 9, 2024

Newsletter no. 221

With this newsletter I would like to start a series of essays on each book of the Bible, from Genesis at the beginning of the Old Testament (OT) to Revelation at the end of the New Testament (NT). Given how many books there are in the Bible—45 or 46 in the OT, depending on how one counts, and 27 in the NT—this project could take us to late 2025 and beyond, with occasional interruptions. I hope that it will bring us into greater familiarity with the Bible.

Before we get to the actual text of the Bible, however, there are things to say about such topics as when and how the Bible was composed, the languages in which it was written, what it means to speak of the Bible's inspiration, how the Bible assumed its authoritative status in Judaism and Christianity, and some of the ways in which it has been interpreted.

As for the when and how of the Bible's composition, we have to distinguish between the OT and the NT, and we are much better informed about the NT than the OT. In each case, though, we have to take into account what is called oral tradition—meaning that the substance of at least some of the books of the Bible was passed down by word of mouth over the years before it was put into written form. In fact it may have existed in several different written forms before coming down to us in its present form.

Thus, for example, if the earliest books of the OT were written down in the ninth or tenth centuries BC, as they possibly were, the oral tradition that preceded the written composition might have been in play for several centuries before that. Stories would have been passed along from generation to generation about the history of Israel and its major figures (personages like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David and others), and about God's special relationship to Israel. When writing was recognized as a way to preserve these precious stories, they then began to be written down. Even so, it took more centuries for these earliest writings in the Bible to achieve their final form. None of these early books was authored by a single person; they appear to have been the work of many hands, sometimes working at cross purposes; in some cases an attentive reader can see that two or more oral traditions at odds with each other were incorporated into a single narrative and that no attempt was made to reconcile them by the final editor.

On the other hand, the latest books of the OT, which date to the first and second centuries BC, were often written by individuals whose names alone have survived. These books have come down to us more or less in the way in which they were originally composed. Nonetheless, they too reflect knowledge that had been built up over the course of many years and was finally put into permanent written form.

Unlike the OT, which took nearly a millennium to put together, the NT was completed in a hundred years at most, and probably in as few as sixty or even fifty, beginning around 50 AD. By far the most important part of the NT is the four Gospels, and with them the issue of oral tradition—and perhaps of some pre-Gospel writings as well—plays an especially significant role. How were the Gospels, which contain everything that we know of Jesus' life and teachings, composed, and how close do they bring us to Jesus himself? Most NT scholars would agree that there are three stages in the formation of the Gospels, beginning with the historical Jesus' actual words and deeds; then going to the oral and perhaps also written tradition concerning what Jesus said and did, as recalled by others at first and second hand and probably also elaborated on by them; and finally, the actual composition of the Gospels, based on the tradition. Assuming that Jesus died c. 30 AD and that the first Gospel was composed c. 65 AD, the oral/written tradition had at least 35 years in which to develop. The question then naturally arises as to whether in those 35 or more years the original words of Jesus were altered or obfuscated. But that is a question that occupies academics more than it does most Christians, who accept the Gospels as being fundamentally true to Jesus' life and teachings, even if they do not always capture the exact words that Jesus uttered, which would have required that he be constantly accompanied by someone to write them down.

In next weekend's newsletter we will discuss the important topic of the languages in which the Bible was written and has been translated into.

Next Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, is Father's Day and the beginning of our Father's Day Novena. If you wish to have your father, living or deceased, remembered at the altar during the novena, you will find envelopes for that purpose at the entrances of the church.

Father Boniface

## Mass intentions for the period from June 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>

### Saturday-Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>

4:00 pm: Kevin Kirby (D)  
8:00 am: The Living and Deceased Members of the Mariadason Family  
10:00 am: St. Joseph's Parishioners  
12:00 noon: Joseph Adamo (D)  
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Julius Ettl (D)  
6:00 pm: In Thanksgiving to Jesus

### Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Frances Bartley (D)

### Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Kevin and Willie Healy (L)

### Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am: Fr. Hector Villamil (D)  
12:15 pm: Antonia D. Ong (D)

### Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Anthony Sclafani (D)

### Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am: John O'Neill (L), Birthday  
12:15 pm: Joe Teklits (D)

### Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>

8:00 am: Teresita Castillo (L)  
12:15 pm: Eileen Farrell (D)  
4:00 pm: Kathleen O'Malley (L)

### Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup> (Father's Day)

8:00 am: Giacomo Roderigo (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