

Donnybrook  
30 September 2021

## **Welcome**

After Midnight Mass in 1995, a group of us walked from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, to celebrate the dawn mass in the church of the Nativity. Underneath the church, there is a chapel dedicated to St Jerome. The place made not be *the* place, but Jerome had lived in Bethlehem. Year before the bishop of Rome asked him to update the Latin translation of these Bible. To improve his knowledge of Hebrew, Jerome move to the Holy Land and studied the Hebrew language and Jewish biblical commentary under rabbis there. The work took many years but eventually a revised version of the Latin Bible appeared, which we call the Vulgate. St Jerome would not have known this but his translation remained the official text of the Roman church for 16 centuries. What you might call a publishing success!

## **Steps**

The translation was needed because the people of the west never understood Hebrew and the knowledge of Greek was fading. One of the ironies is that the purpose of the Vulgate was to provide the Bible in the language of the people... and then it got stuck and remained in use long after ordinary people understood Latin.

Nowadays, the work of the translation goes on. In English, we have an extraordinary variety of versions to choose from. Our reading are from the original Jerusalem Bible, which has since been twice revised and now comes as the RNJB. A very popular version today is the New Revised Standard Version, again in various editions. When I am asked which is the best translation of the Bible, I first of all make the obvious point that none is perfect and they all fail to some degree. However, by and large, I recommend have more than one version to hand. Usually I recommend a choice between the RNJB, the NET (explain) and the NRSV in the Harper Collins study edition.

The discussion of which translation has become important because bishops in different countries are looking at a new version of the lectionary – to bring it up to date etc. There is a second more important reason. We find ourselves at a fork in the road, as a community of faith. As we begin again, the regeneration of church can have no other genesis than the Scripture, both a community level and as individual believers. The word of God is alive and active.

## **Prayer**

Lord,  
inspire us to read your Scriptures  
and to meditate upon them day and night.  
We beg you to give us real understanding of what we need,  
that we in turn may put its precepts into practice.  
Yet we know that understanding and good intentions are worthless,  
unless rooted in your graceful love.  
So we ask that the words of Scriptures  
may also be not just signs on a page,  
but channels of grace into our hearts.