



People Still Look to the Bible for Truth



ow well do you know your Bible? Chances are, if you're living in the United States, you know it quite well and rank it as one of the most popular books of all time.

This is only one of many interesting findings in a poll conducted this past spring by the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) and GFK-Eurisko in anticipation of the Twelfth Ordinary World Synod of Bishops, which meets in Rome on October 5-26 to discuss "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church."

The purpose of the survey was "to acquire concrete information on Christians' relationship with Scripture," said CBA president Bishop Vincenzo Paglia at a press conference in Vatican City.

The survey was one of the most scientific studies ever conducted to gauge the level of familiarity with Scripture among the adult population. More than 13,000 interviews were conducted with respondents in the U.S.A., England, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Poland and Russia. Most, but not all, of the respondents were Christian. In the United States and England, they were mostly Protestant; in Russia they were Russian Orthodox; and in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and Poland they were mostly Catholic.

Americans revealed themselves to be more prayerful and more likely to be connected to the Bible than most European Christians. Three-quarters of American respondents said they had read

at least a phrase from the Bible in the past 12 months, compared to only 20 to 38 percent of respondents from other countries. The countries with the lowest rate of Bible reading were Spain (20 percent) and France (21 percent).

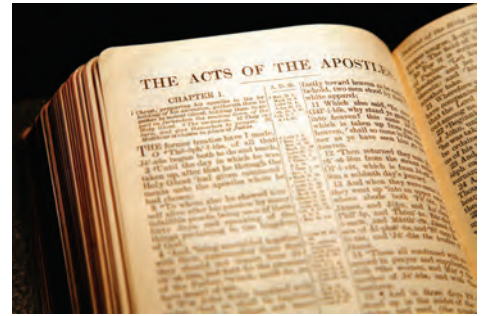
The majority of respondents in all countries say they believe the Bible to be the direct word of God or to be inspired by God. However, Germany and the Netherlands had the highest number of people who did not believe the Bible was divinely inspired but instead considered it to be "an ancient book made up of legends, historical facts and teachings written by man."

Almost all Americans (93 percent) said they had a Bible at home, compared to the French who were the least likely to do so (48 percent).

What the survey told the participants in the upcoming Synod is that Scripture is still regarded with great respect among the people. Among Christians, "it is widely held that the Bible contains the Word of God, that it is an inspired work capable of giving meaning to life, and that it has far greater authority than other ecclesial manifestations," Bishop Paglia said, although its values "are difficult to put into practice."

It also reaffirmed the bond that exists between the Bible and the Eucharist because "the majority of those interviewed indicated the Sunday celebration as the place in which they habitually listened to the Word of God," he said.

According to the recently released guideline of the Synod, the *Lineamenta*,



the aim of the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the world's bishops is "to help clarify the basic truths of Revelation as the Word of God, Divine Tradition, the Bible and the Magisterium, which prompt and guarantee an authentic and effective living of the faith; to spark an appreciation and deep love of Sacred Scriptures so that 'the faithful might have easy access' to it; to renew listening to the Word of God, in the liturgy and catechesis, specifically through '*lectio divina*,' duly adapted to various circumstances; and to offer a Word of consolation and hope to the poor of the world."



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