Columns
Horizons
Spirituality



Sr. Kathryn Press displays her Bible from college. (Kathryn Press)



by Kathryn Press

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"Where is your family Bible?" I sometimes ask high school students. As for my own family, we have two. One comes from my mom's side of the family. It's hardbound with a white cover and has pages for the family tree and sacraments records. Sometime during my childhood, devout Lutheran family friends gave us a red-letter Bible with a tan and brown cover. It had lots of footnotes! As far back as I can remember, we kept these Bibles on a shelf in our living room.

When I was in eighth grade, my parish gave us Bibles for confirmation. My name was on a sticker on the inside cover. It was a navy blue paperback and the pages were terribly thin. I remember being disappointed the day I cracked the spine.

As a teenager, I remember my Lutheran friends impressing me with their multiplicity of memorized passages and ability to cite Scripture, chapter and verse. I may not have read my Bible with any frequency, but I knew where mine was and I knew my way around it. It just wasn't where I turned for answers or guidance or comfort or inspiration.

In high school, I went to a weekly Bible study where we read the Gospel for the coming Sunday. I don't remember if we brought Bibles with us. I did, however, use my confirmation Bible's table of contents to memorize the books of the New Testament — in order — for a senior religion exam.

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In August 2001, I went to the campus bookstore to buy what I needed for my Theology 101 class. I bought a used HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV) for $21.70. Later that year I covered it with a brown paper bag for protection. That cover remained for nearly 15 years.

I took Scripture classes in college, but all I really remember learning about was the life of St. Paul. Again, I remember my Old and New Testament professors in graduate school more than I remember actually reading from the Old and New Testaments. This started to change when I took a course on preaching. (I went to a Dominican school.) Our professors helped us study and personally digest passages. (Here, I first learned about The Text This Week — a great resource I still use today.) Now, I studied the Bible and looked for wisdom and encouragement, and sometimes answers, too. Finally, I began integrating Scripture and theology.

Now, after 15 years in the convent, I can't imagine my life without that Bible. It's lived every place I have since 2001 (five U.S. states and two countries). It accompanies me on every annual retreat. It has quickly become an extension of my prayer and personality. It is bursting with "extra bits": handouts from retreats and workshops, copies of talks I've given, cards from friends, *lectio divina* notes, countless post-its, pages torn from missalettes. It is a living, breathing reminder of how God speaks to me through the Word.

One thing has changed about "my" Bible: the cover. After 15 years of the brown paper bag cover (reinforced at the edges with tape after they frayed), I made myself a new cover as a gift to myself at my perpetual profession. The cover now displays the bookmark of the verse from my first profession Mass. It is a beautiful reminder of the importance of my vocation and God's fidelity to me.

Many days, I don't open my Bible. But I do read from it! Scripture permeates many different aspects of my life. The most central would be the Liturgy of the Hours I pray in community. I also participate in a *lectio divina* group that reads the upcoming Sunday Gospel. This past year, The Bible Project and I have gone on many walks together as I've listened to their recent podcast series on the Sermon on the Mount. And then there's "The Chosen" — which challenges me to imagine Scripture coming to life as they portray the pages of the Gospel before my very eyes. Not a day goes by that Scripture isn't woven in and out of my mind and heart and lips.

I'd love to know: Where is your family Bible? What role do the Scriptures play in your life?