

CHURCH AND FAMILY : ACCOMPANYING THE
YOUTH ON THEIR FAITH JOURNEY AND
DISCERNING GOD'S CALLING
IN THEIR LIVES

BIBLE SUNDAY

26 AUGUST 2018



Southern African Catholic
Bishops' Conference



Catholic Bible Foundation of SA
www.catholicbible.org.za



www.biblesociety.co.za
bible society of south africa

“Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices...”



“My Dear Young People,

I am pleased to announce that in October 2018 a Synod of Bishops will take place to treat the topic: “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” I want you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart. A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity.

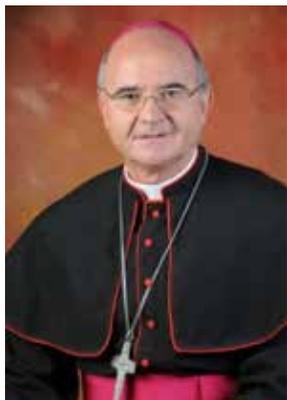
Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master. The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls.

I entrust you to Mary of Nazareth, a young person like yourselves, whom God beheld lovingly, so she might take your hand and guide you to the joy of fully and generously responding to God’s call with the words: “Here I am” (cf. Lk 1:38)”. (Pre synod letter to the youth)

Message from SACBC



Southern African Catholic
Bishops' Conference



CELEBRATING BIBLE SUNDAY: 26 AUGUST 2018

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word' (Heb 1: 3 NIV)

Bible Sunday is a reminder of the call of the Church to make the Holy Bible the centre and the source of our spirituality. Take time to read the Bible - the Word of God - for it can be compared to listening to a Symphony being played out by the God of all that is created - a single Word is expressed in many ways: in Jesus Christ, in Creation, in Sacred Scripture, in the Eucharist.

The Bible contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity, sheds unique light on our path in a dark world, and sets forth the way to our eternal well-being. Within its pages we find the inspiration, direction, and guidance for all that exists, and the history of humanity and the world.

Pope Francis continues to encourage us to venerate, read, listen to, proclaim, preach, study and spread the Word of God. As we spend time reading, contemplating and meditating on the Word of God we are led to a fuller and more abundant life, where God reveals himself to us in different ways, is a constant presence in our lives and invites us to have a personal relationship with him. As the body needs physical nourishment, so does the soul yearn for the spiritual sustenance that comes from the Word of God. 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Mat 4:4 NIV)

As the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference endorses the celebration of Bible Sunday on 26 August 2018, we pray that the Holy Bible may enrich our lives with God's presence and his Word, and reveal to us a deeper understanding of God's love, mercy and compassion which we can take to the world around us.

Sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Stephen Brislin".

+Stephen Brislin
President
Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference



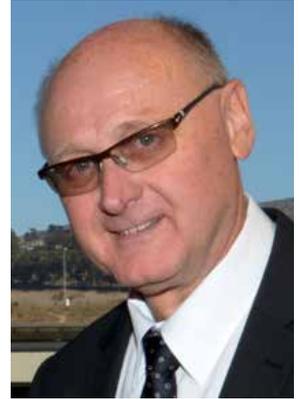
ENDORSEMENT OF BIBLE SUNDAY

"How can young people keep their lives pure? By obeying your commands." Psalm 119:9 (GNT)

According to South African population statistics, we live in a country where almost 30% of the population is younger than 15 years of age.

I think there are a number of important facts we can agree on when thinking about young people in our land:

- High standards of education are needed should we want a country with qualified leaders and a population with the skills we need in the future.
- We want a nation with high moral values which, for us as Christians, are based on Holy Scripture.
- But we will also agree that many of our young people live with fears. They fear that they are not good enough, not well liked, may not find a job, may never fulfil their dreams, etc. From these multiple fears and uncertainties emerge a sense of inadequacy.



In his message for the 33rd World Youth Day in 2018, His Holiness Pope Francis made it clear that the Bible does not ignore the human experience of fear nor its many causes. He stressed to young people that God speaks with us through the Bible, also about our fears. In the words of Pope Francis, "In the Sacred Scriptures the expression 'do not be afraid' is repeated 365 times with different variations, as if to tell us that the Lord wants us to be free from fear, every day of the year."

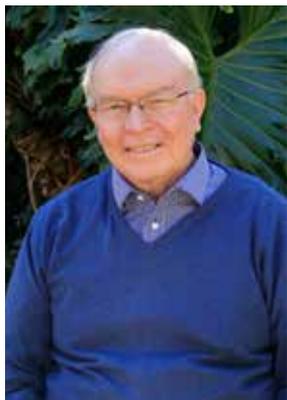
Making sure that young people have access to the Bible and its teachings from a young age is thus the responsibility of the Church and of parents. For this reason, the Bible Society with its mission to provide affordable Bibles for everyone in their own language and in suitable formats so that all may receive the life-giving message of the Word, wants to take hands with the Church.

Fellow brothers and sisters, we join with the Bishops in encouraging you to support Bible Sunday so that as Church and Bible Society we can continue to work together to make sure that our young people are rooted in the faith and that they have access to the Bible through which God speaks to them, the Bible that will help them to live a victorious life without fear. May God bless you!

In the service of the Word

Rev Dirk Gevers
Chief Executive Officer

Message from Catholic Bible Foundation



Bible Sunday is an opportunity for the Church to celebrate the continued impact of the Word in our lives and communities, giving us a new lease of life. When people engage with the Word, lives are changed for good. This is why the Church venerates the Word and the Eucharist because from both she gets spiritual increase.

The Church recognises that the youth of today live a stress filled life that can deplete them. They are bombarded from all angles by peer pressure, bullying, racism and are surrounded by effects of all the crises: violence, crime, poverty, television, internet which exposes them to more and instant worrisome events. To stand in the midst of such pressures, they need the veracity of God's Word and hand.

This year, the Church focuses on how we can help the youth in their faith, vocation and discernment. Parents (the family unit), bible/catechism teachers and the religious (the trio) are called to promote, motivate and show the youth why they have to hold on to the Word of God (Word) not only as a crutch but as a standard and solution for life and their need for relationship and relevance. Speaking about "holiness" and that "Jesus walked on water" alone, without breaking it for them might achieve the opposite result.

As the hope of nations, our challenge as communities is how we can accompany them in discerning God's will in their lives. As Cardinal José Luis Lacunza of Panama puts it: "..... when talking about young people, the voices of the protagonists should come through loud and clear an opportunity to listen to them, to learn about their experiences, demands, challenges should be provided." To enable the Church and families to accompany to learn to listen to young people and not just talk to them. When they speak, let us take notes and act on them.

As a Foundation, we are one of the arms of the Church that helps people enter into a personal and deeper relationship with the Word of God through Scripture.

We offer various programmes that are needs based but we also have basic ones. There is something for everybody: individuals, parishes, guilds, and the religious, small faith sharing groups, schools and colleges (teachers/pupils and students), families, those in leadership positions etc. For more information visit us on www.catholicbible.org.za

We wish you a grace filled celebration.

A handwritten signature in cursive, appearing to read 'mchalmers', with a horizontal line underneath.

Michael Chalmers cfc
National Director, Catholic Bible Foundation

HOMILIES for Bible Sunday

Is it not true that when we are young we have so many questions! From the first moment of being able to talk we have so much to learn; indeed, so many questions! And it does not stop when we reach adolescence. I have vivid memories of the year after I finished school: I was asking with urgency: "what is life all about?" "What do I want to do with my life?" "Where will life take me?"

In my eighteenth year I was given a small pocket-book Bible and I began to read the Word of God in a new way. In that special year two fundamental things came alive in me: one was that God loved me; and inseparable from that, God had a purpose and a plan for me. I remember being amazed – God loved me, "yes little old me, how could it be?!" Now years later I am also able to understand the celebrated words of the great Blessed John Henry Newman (with a strong Bible-based faith as an adolescent he also had an experience of God's very real love for him!) Newman spoke of the fact that God has a task for each one of us that is ours alone: each one of us has a tailor-made part to play in God's great plan of redemption and recreation.



Bishop Graham Rose

Ever since that first year after school I have had a deep sense of the beauty of the Word of God. I know that I owe so much to God for what He revealed to me in and through the Bible. Is it not something so supremely wonderful that our God has not been silent but has spoken (and still speaks) to us in human words?!

But let's get back to the matter of "questions!" One of the most moving stories of the Bible is to be found in the Gospel of St Luke where we hear about the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Remember how sad and downcast they were – they had placed all their hopes in Jesus Christ and now he was dead; he had been crucified and they were leaving Jerusalem, their dreams shattered. The beautiful story tells of how the Risen Jesus came and walked beside them. Most wonderfully the Word of God continues "then starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages that were about him." (Lk 24: 27)

Now that must have been some lecture! For thousands of years we human beings have been graced to be able to read the Word of God: how many lectures on the Bible have been delivered by so many erudite and educated people! Yet not one of them has come near to what Cleopas and his companion heard on the road to Emmaus! Still, I find myself not so much wanting to listen to another lecture; I would much prefer to meet People and to listen to their lived experience of the Word of God.

What of the great People in the Bible?! Well of course we think of Jesus himself first: it is striking how readily Jesus himself quoted from the Word of God. For example, in the story of Jesus' forty days in the desert, we know he resisted the temptation of Satan by quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy. He rebuked Satan saying that "man does not live on bread

alone!" (Deut.8: 3) Just one of many examples that show us that the Word of God was a great strength to Jesus.

And what of Jesus' Mother, Mary? Her own prayer: known, loved and recited every evening by the Church, reveals Mary to be a woman deeply informed and shaped by the Word of God. Some three hundred-plus years later in the story of the Christian Community we encounter a man (like us, surely!) with so many questions. I am referring to the great St Augustine. He was forever asking questions of life. For a while he followed a famous pagan philosophy but remained restless. His famous words express this: "our hearts are restless O Lord until they rest in You!" His conversion to Christianity came about when he heard a voice within say "Take and read". Taking up the Word of God he came to rest in the Love of the God. There are so many other examples: indeed it is a mark of the true holiness of the Christian that he or she is inspired and strengthened by the Word of God.

I recall some years ago I was asked to represent the Catholic Church in a dialogue with a celebrated Jewish Rabbi. The meeting took place in the Synagogue in Greenpoint in Cape Town. Towards the end of our conversation I made a point of thanking the Jewish People for the gift of the Psalms. These magnificent prayers; an integral part of the Word of God have been cherished, preserved and handed on to each generation over thousands of years. I simply could not survive without them in my life!

Another memory that sticks in my mind is of a teacher of mine at the Seminary in Pretoria. Fr Stephen Whyte was a Franciscan who had been in China in his early years as a Priest. He often spoke of his love for St Paul and I wondered why. Now some 40 years later and some 50 years since my first young adult reading of the Word of God, mentioned above, I think I am beginning to understand where Fr Stephen was coming from! The power in the letters of St Paul - another integral part of the Word of God - is literally awesome!

When I became a Priest, I chose certain words as my special text (later also as my Episcopal Motto) - words that came from St Paul's letter to the Colossians. Writing of Jesus Christ, St Paul tells the Colossians: "He is before all things and in Him all things hold together." It is striking how the Word of God shines light on our experiences and on our lives. We might put it this way and say that our questioning lives find clarity in and through the Word of God. That certainly has been my experience: years ago, in a moment of extreme weakness and vulnerability I experienced a "Power" that held me together. Reading St Paul's words in the Bible I am convinced that it was Jesus Christ that held me together and still holds me!

In a special way, the Gospels both record and proclaim the Person and the Teaching of Jesus the Christ. Jesus' parables are both simple and at the same time deeply profound. I love the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke Chapter 12! Then there is the truly great Sermon on the Mount, loved also by non-Christians, famously by Mahatma Gandhi! One could go on citing so many different parts of the Bible and how they impact on our society and on each one of us today. What strikes us is the enduring power, the truth of the Word of God even after 2000 years they still speak to us and challenge us!!

I mentioned there "the power, the truth." Today we have a real problem precisely with the truth. Today our questions are more desperate than ever: they echo the riveting question of Pontius Pilate "what is truth?" Is it not true that never before have we had so much information

at our fingertips simply at the press of a keyboard key (or the touch of a screen!) we are deluged with data! And is it not equally true that never before have we been so insecure and distrustful of the replies that meet our and Pilate's question? After all, it could be "fake news" again!!

Pilate's question is spoken by the young and the old. Such is the age we live in: the young do not know what it is they are getting into and the old wonder about where they have come from. Both the past and the future are neither understood nor trusted. How helpful then to remember Thomas's anxious question put to Jesus: "Lord we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (Jn 14: 4) Jesus' ringing reply to Thomas: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14: 6) resonates down the centuries and in our time speaks as never before to our urgent enquiry! Here Truth is to be found!

In the Gospel of today (the 21st Sunday of the Year) we see all twelve Apostles confronted by their own questions and doubts – in this they are so very modern: they are our brothers; they share our own questions and anxieties. Jesus asks them "What about you, do you want to go away too?" (Jn 6: 67) They reply with words that speak to us and for us: "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the message of eternal life." (Jn 6: 68) Further on in John's Gospel Jesus says clearly that the one "who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life for his guide." (Jn 8: 12)

It is so easy to take for granted our knowledge of these wonderful conversations – and the Prophets, the Parables, the Letters...etc! Should we not stop and in doing so, grow in our realization and appreciation that it is the Word of God that records these words. This stirs an old memory of the reading I did as a teenager seeking answers to my many questions! I remember stirring stories of Missionaries who risked their lives in smuggling the Word of God into atheistic countries. The Bible is so freely available to us; perhaps we take it for granted? What if people had to risk their lives to get it to us...or we to read it?

Today on Bible Sunday we give thanks for the gift of the Word of God given to us to accompany us and so to illuminate and redeem our lives! And we give thanks for so many great and inspiring people who have taken this Word into their hearts and have lived by it. We are not alone in this great adventure!

When a woman in the crowd cried out praising the Mother of Jesus it was Jesus himself who responded: "Still happier are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!" (Lk 11: 27-28) Today on Bible Sunday may we keep God's Word with great joy and great gratitude; and may St Paul say of us what he said about the Thessalonians: "Another reason why we constantly give thanks to God for you is that as soon as you heard the message that we brought you as God's message, you accepted it for what it really is, God's message and not some human thinking...." (1 Thess 2: 13)

“You have the Words of eternal life” (Jn 6: 67)



**Bishop Vincent
Mduduzi Zungu**

As we approach Bible Sunday, it is very important for all of us to be reminded once again of the fundamental importance of the Word of God in our personal life, in our parish communities and in our society, especially as the Catholic Church in Southern Africa recalls with gratitude 200 years of its existence.

The Church was born from the proclamation of the joy of the Gospel by missionaries: priests, religious men and women and thousands of committed laity who invested their time, energy, expertise and meagre resources to build the young and vibrant Church which seems to be growing slowly but surely. Let us continue to praise God and pay tribute to these illustrious people in their successive generations, our forbearers: fathers and mothers in the faith. They gave us quality education, health care, prepared people for sacraments, fed the hungry, and visited the prisoners, shared in our joys and struggles. Some learnt our local languages, cultures and even adopted our local clan names such as ‘Mihethwa’, ‘Gatyeni’, ‘Rabasofo’, ‘Thula’

– the list is endless. They defied the ‘intrinsic evil’ and system of apartheid and lived in our townships, informal settlements and in our rural communities. Above all they handed on to us ‘the Words of eternal life’ by preaching the Gospel, not only with their lips but with their testimony of life.

In the Gospel of St John chapter six we are given a vivid image of the dramatic crisis of faith among many disciples of the Lord. After an extensive teaching on the Eucharist – his Body and Blood, Jesus realises that big failure was looming. Hundreds of his followers had abandoned him and decided to no longer walk with him. They were embarrassed and scandalised by his teaching. “This is intolerable language! How could anyone accept it?” (Jn 6: 60). This was not the first time that the teaching of Jesus was understood to be radical and insurmountable. When the rich young man was told to go, sell everything he owns and distribute its proceeds to the poor in order to gain eternal life, he found it too difficult. He went away sad and disappointed (Mt 19: 16-24). The teaching on the Mountain: “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you, if someone strikes you turn the other cheek (Lk 6: 27-29)” – this too, was very difficult and radical. How do we find these Gospel values, principles and teaching of Jesus ourselves? Do we try to understand, internalise and cultivate these Gospel values in our families, workplace, and social institutions and in our lives in general?

It must have been extremely sad for Jesus to see many disciples leaving him. But he remained steadfast and refused the temptation to water down his teaching. He did not dilute it and remove ‘caffeine’, that is, the ‘bite’ so that his listeners would be fed with ‘de-caffeinated’ Christianity that has lost its taste, like the salt that has become good for nothing, but to be trampled underfoot. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and said to them: “What about you, do you want to go away too?” Simon Peter answered, “Lord, who we shall go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6: 68-69).

Dear Brothers and Sisters, this fundamental question is directed to each and every one of us today. Jesus is turning his eyes towards us and asks, "What about you, do you also want to go away too?" You were admitted to first Communion; you were recently confirmed or received into the Church; you were united by God through the sacrament of matrimony not so long ago; you just made your first or final vows in your Religious congregation; you were ordained a deacon, priest, or even bishop hardly five or ten years ago. What is the quality of your relationship with God? Do you remain faithful to Him, to your Christian commitment and live according to your state of life? Are you growing steadily in your call to holiness or are you regressing?

All our interpersonal relationships on all levels must be put under the scrutiny of the Word of God so that they may be purified and transformed by the 'fire' of the Gospel. Like St Peter and his companions, we are able to make the authentic profession of faith with sincerity of heart: "You have the Words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God".

Here is another plea, prayer and invocation from St Paul:

"I implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, through all and within all." Amen! (Ephesians 4: 1- 6).



SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING BIBLE SUNDAY

As we celebrate Bible Sunday in our parishes the focus this year is on what we can do and how we accompany the youth on their faith and vocational discernment. The following are suggestions you can consider:

1. Put a programme that understands that:
 - a. Shows that young people are part of the bigger Church. Therefore they have to be included and participate in Church activities from a young age to avoid them "running away after Confirmation."
 - b. Looks at what and how you can engage and involve the youth more.
 - c. Understands what young people think, seek, desire and what their challenges are in order to help and guide them on their faith journey.
 - d. Addresses the Pope's challenge to us: "I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves."
 - e. Considers and acts on suggestions from the youth on evangelisation: "It's from what young people tell us that we have to move forth, because if we don't listen to their suggestions on how to evangelise, then even (the synod on the youth) will be worthless." (Cardinal Lacunza)
 - f. Involves them.

2. What can you do to make the Bible Alive?
 - a. Start with encouraging them to put the Word at the centre of their lives: in their daily lives, at home, in Catechism, Sunday school, in their achievements, joys and sorrows. The Church is clear on this": "The synod recommends a greater "biblical apostolate", not alongside other forms of pastoral work but as a means of letting the bible inspire all pastoral work." Verbum Domini 73 The Word will encourage them to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ and experience what is in it for them:
 - b. Give them Liturgical guides and encourage them to go to the daily readings. They can get a copy from your parish office or download one from www.catholicbible.org.za
 - c. You can start with the readings of the 21st Sunday of the year here below:

26	S	Jos 24:1-2,15-18	Ps 34	Eph 5:21-32	Jn 6:60-69
27	M	2 Thes 1:1-5,11-12	Ps 96		Mt 23:13-22
28	T	2 Thes 2:1-3,14-16	Ps 96		Mt 23:23-26
29	W	2 Thes 3:6-10,16-18	Ps 128		Mt 23:27-32
30	Th	1 Cor 1:1-9		Ps 145	Mt 24:42-51
31	F	1 Cor 1:17-25		Ps 33	Mt 25:1-13

- d. In your teaching of the Catholic faith:
 - i. Demonstrate that going to the Word is practical and useful (2 Timothy 3:16–17), it goes beyond education; it is about every day and every situation. They should show that it is not an “ancient, lifeless book” but a living, relevant and practical tool with visible transformational implications. It is the same powerful spoken Word that brought creation. (John 1: 1) It is the same powerful Word that will carry them through anything they may encounter. Having young Catechists can also help create easier connections.
 - ii. Help them understand that the Word of God is about a God who loves them and wants to be in a relationship with them: “..... in his divine image we were created” (Gen 1: 27a) so that we can love ourselves, love others and only then love God. This way, they can “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18.
 - iii. Teach them to realise that God is the source of all that is good and worthwhile.
 - iv. Encourage them develop a personal, deeper and dynamic relationship with the Word in Scripture.
 - v. Show them that God wants them to live abundant lives, now. (John 10:10)
 - vi. Give them renewal and support.
 - vii. Present God as one who cares about them and their interests in a practical way.
3. Make the youth ministry a key component of their lives: focussing on relationships:
 - a. Unless forced by their parents, often young people attend these groups because their peers attend or have invited them to attend. Purposefully therefore, incorporate activities that build them into a community of believers and not just friends and give them a taste of what God intends the Church to be;
 - b. Youth leadership has to earn trust of their members not by control and superiority but by affirming and encourage them;
 - c. Listen actively with the heart and body language;
 - d. Be available for them when they need you;
 - e. As teachers be real and genuine friends.
4. Mass
In order to develop a relationship within the Church, all key roles in all Masses on Bible Sunday can be done by the youth. Conduct a renewal of commitment for those in various ministries in your parish.
5. Bless Bibles on Bible Sunday.
6. Have a second collection to support the Catholic Bible Foundation.
7. Establish a youth summer camp:
Ask the youth to establish a theme for the camp. Take an offering to help those that cannot afford the fees for the camp. Invite an adult from each of the ministries of the parish to speak to the youth. If you can, make it an annual event.
8. Conduct a parade within your community to bring more awareness about Bible Sunday.
9. Organise a Bible Walk to raise funds for Bibles for the less fortunate members of your community.
10. Encourage each other to do random acts of kindness.

11. Organise a Bible Quiz:
 - a. Organize a Bible Quiz Committee to oversee the preparations.
 - b. Decide on the objective/s of the quiz; translation to be used; coverage (one, two or several books, memory verses, Old or New Testament, stories, characters, prophets etc).
 - c. Decide eligibility of participants: elementary/high school/college/young adults.
 - d. Mechanics of the quiz: quiz master; judges; number of rounds; ties; questions; materials needed (small white boards, markers, erasers etc); prizes etc.
12. Activities for children.

Decide what works for your parish. Here is a colouring sheet you can use:



**"You, Lord, are my shepherd.
I will never be in need."**

Psalm 23:1

Lord Jesus, your Church and families turn their attention to all the young people of the world. We pray that they might boldly take charge of their lives, aim for the most beautiful and profound things of life and always keep their hearts unencumbered.

Accompanied by wise and generous guides, help them respond to the call you make to each of them, to realise a proper plan of life and achieve happiness.

AMEN





For more information on Bible Sunday and various Scripture programmes contact:

JOHANNESBURG

011 435 7488

jhb@catholicbible.org.za

DURBAN

031 303 1919

dbn@catholicbible.org.za

visit: www.catholicbible.org.za



Southern African Catholic
Bishops' Conference



Catholic Bible Foundation of SA
www.catholicbible.org.za



www.biblesociety.co.za
bible society of south africa