

Ask the Deacon for March 2017

Would the Catholic Church agree with Jews that the age of the earth is about 5,700 years old?

Not all Jews think this. The Hebrew calendar, which is said to date from the creation of the earth, reckons 2017 to be the Hebrew year of 5777. While there may be some Jews who consider this date to be literal, many understand the calendar in a liturgical sense. Christians recognize that the Gregorian calendar does not date exactly the birth of Christ, but we retain the calendar because of centuries of liturgical and secular custom. Many Jews do the same with the Hebrew calendar even though they do not believe that it dates to the literal creation of the world.

The Catholic Church leaves questions such as the literal age of the earth to science. At present Catholics are free to have differing views about the age of the earth.

Why doesn't the Catholic Church emphasize reading the Bible?

The Catholic Church does emphasize reading the Bible. Catholics meditate on Scripture at every Mass. The readings and responsorial psalm during the Liturgy of the Word are taken directly from Scripture!

The Second Vatican Council "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ by frequent reading of the divine Scripture."

The Church even grants indulgences for reading the Bible! The Handbook on Indulgences explains:

A partial indulgence is granted the Christian faithful who read Sacred Scripture with the veneration due God's Word and as a form spiritual reading. The indulgence will be a plenary one when such reading is for at least one-half hour, as long as one meets all of the stipulations required by the indulgence. Read the Catholic Catechism for further info on indulgences paragraph 1471-1473.

When was it first recognized that Deacons could consecrate the Eucharistic host?

Deacons can read the Gospel at Mass and preach; they can baptize, witness weddings, officiate at funerals and officiate at Liturgies of the Word with Communion. They cannot celebrate Mass because they do not have the power to consecrate the bread and wine. This is a power that only priests and bishops possess and has always been the case.