

Catholic

UPDATE

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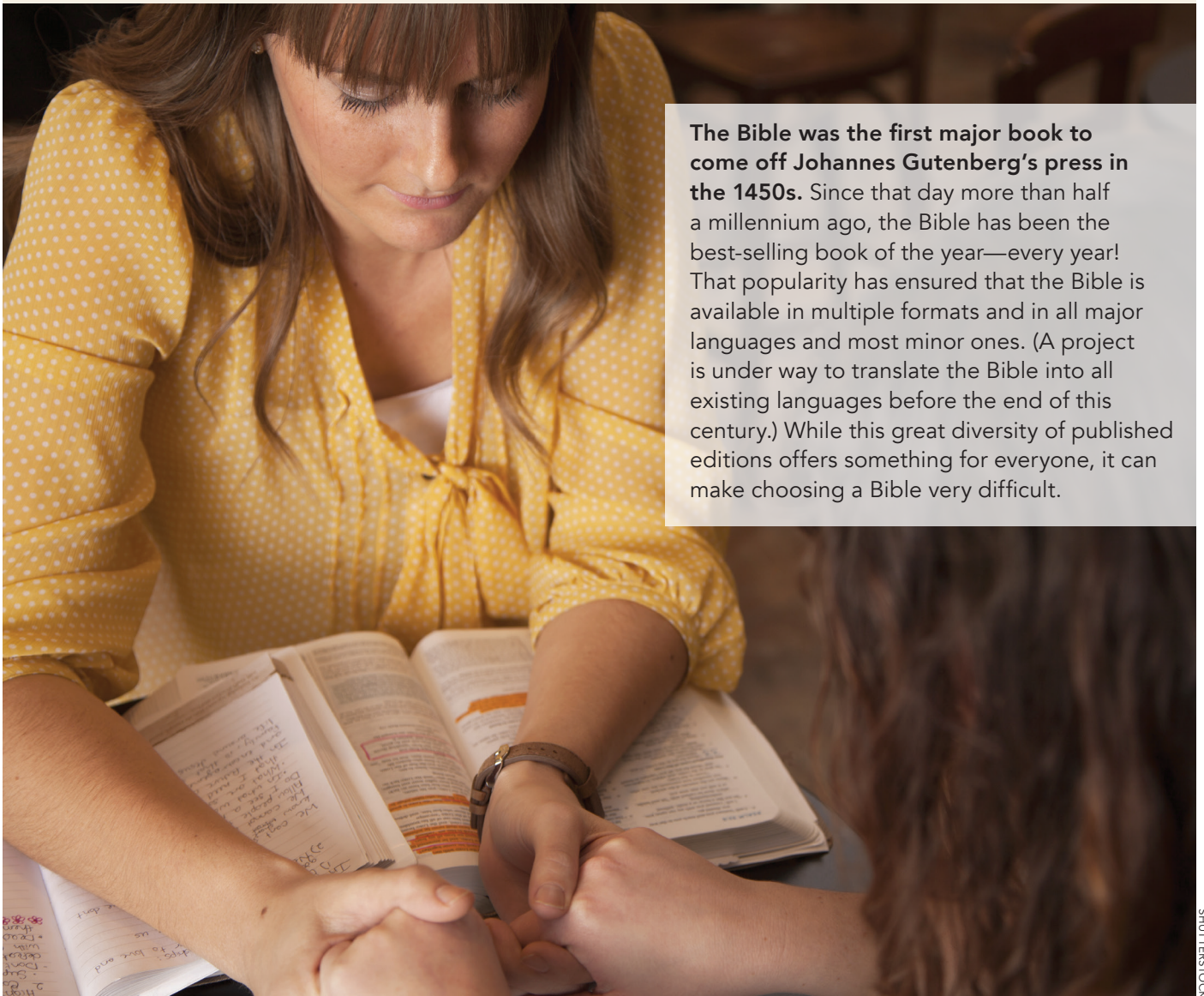
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Choosing and Using a Bible

PRAY, STUDY, AND DISCERN

MARY ELIZABETH SPERRY



The Bible was the first major book to come off Johannes Gutenberg's press in the 1450s. Since that day more than half a millennium ago, the Bible has been the best-selling book of the year—every year! That popularity has ensured that the Bible is available in multiple formats and in all major languages and most minor ones. (A project is under way to translate the Bible into all existing languages before the end of this century.) While this great diversity of published editions offers something for everyone, it can make choosing a Bible very difficult.

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Step into a bookstore and you'll be faced with shelf after shelf of Bibles in various languages and translations, some identified as intended for specific groups: women, men, youth, people in recovery, new believers, and so on. Going online only increases the challenge since, unbound by shelf space, the options increase, adding digital editions to the mix as well. Whether you plan to buy a Bible for yourself or give one as a gift, sorting through the options to choose just one may seem like an insurmountable task. If you ask a priest or catechist which Bible you should buy, the answer you're most likely to receive is: *the one you'll read*. But how do you know which one that is?



The first step in choosing a Bible is identifying a Catholic edition. Unfortunately, that's not as simple as looking for the word *Catholic* in the title or on the cover, as no regulations define how a publisher may describe a Bible. Instead, you'll need to check for three things:

1. The Bible should contain all seventy-two books of Scripture, including the deuterocanonical books and the complete texts of Daniel and Esther. These books should be included in the Old Testament, not placed between the Old and the New.
2. The translation should have an *imprimatur* or canonical rescript from a bishop or episcopal conference, indicating that the text has been reviewed and approved by Church authorities.
3. Any study materials that accompany the Bible text should have an *imprimatur* as well, since they also should have been reviewed and approved.

Some Bible translations are available only in Catholic editions, some only in non-Catholic editions, and some in both.

The next step in choosing a Bible is selecting a translation. Translation is an art, not a science. There is more than one way to translate. Translators cannot simply plug in English words for their Greek or Hebrew counterparts and expect that the

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