

Seminar series hopes to bring Scripture to everyday life

A new public seminar series hopes to unpack how Scripture can impact our lives each day.

Starting Jan. 17, Newman Theological College will offer free, one-hour seminars each week focusing on the Gospel of Mark and the Book of Leviticus.

The *Living in the Word* seminars take their title from Archbishop Richard Smith's pastoral letter, published in September, which encourages Catholics to read and learn more about the Bible. The seminars are planned over the next five years, with each set focusing on a different book of the Bible.

Each 13-week seminar series will involve participants reading the Scripture aloud, followed by a discussion of the text.

"We explore ... how what we've read can be applicable in our lives. So it's the doing of the Word, which the pastoral letter speaks about," said Dr. Stéphane Saulnier, the creator of the *Living in the Word* seminars and a professor of Sacred Scripture at the Newman Theological College.

"We can claim to know about God if we just echo what we hear from here or there, but how do we really get to know God if we're not reading God's word?"

The Book of Leviticus in particular contains potentially controversial passages, including those that deal with sexual relations. However, Saulnier says focusing on those verses without the proper context is the wrong approach.

"How do we read the Old Testament as Christians? That's where we start. And we need to keep in mind that relationship," said Saulnier. "With the coming of the Son of God, the way then we understand Scripture has to be framed with that."

Saulnier quotes St. Jerome, who said "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ".

"We're not studying in the sense that we're preparing for exams, that's not at all the aim. The aim is to become better acquainted, to come to know what the text says," Saulnier said.

"The Catholic faith is based on a relationship between God the creator and his creation, us. That relationship is based on a historical event, which is the coming in the flesh of the Son of God. He came to reveal God to us. How can we come to know God? By coming closer to the Son of God, and by reading the Word of God."

Gospel of Mark seminars will be held on Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Sherwood Park, while the Book of Leviticus seminars will be held at 12:10 p.m on Thursdays at Newman Theological College.

More information on the Living in the Word seminar series can be found at <https://newman.edu/BenedictXVIIInstitute/LivingintheWord>

Saulnier, and Rev. John Kohler of St. Joseph Seminary, are also a part of an upcoming Grandin Media video series called Open Book, which will explain difficult and challenging Bible passages in lay-friendly language.

This is not the first time Saulnier has created a Scripture seminar series. In 2010, his seminars on the Early Church Fathers, which looked at Scripture, writings and documents, became the Treasures of the Faith series which is offered through Newman Theological College.