

Fundación Ramón Pané

God with Us

The Story of Jesus as Told by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John





Para ser discípulo y misionero del Señor
Jesús hay que conocer su Palabra es-
crita en los Evangelios.

Con mi bendición,

Francisco

*To be a disciple and missionary of the Lord
Jesus we must know his Word written in the Gospels.*

With my blessing,

—Francis

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The Ramón Pané Foundation takes its name from one of the greatest figures in the evangelization of America. It was founded in 1994 in honor and memory of Ramón Pané, who is considered to be the first missionary to America. It is an international group of Catholics whose mission is to help all the dioceses, Episcopal Conferences and Catholic organizations in educational, missionary and spiritual training. Its main office is in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and it has an office in Miami, USA. For more information about FRP's mission and work, go to www.fundacionpane.org.

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Office of the Archbishop

April 30, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the Gospel of John, we hear the story of some people who came to the Apostle Philip and they asked him, “We wish to see Jesus!”

We all need to see Jesus. Because only when we come to meet Jesus and know his love, does our life truly begin. Only Jesus can show us the face of the Father.

Our encounter with Jesus begins in the pages of the Gospels. In these pages we meet the Son of the living God. And by listening to his words and reflecting on his example, we come to know that God is with us.

Pope Francis says we should all carry a small copy of the Gospels that can fit in our pockets and we should pull it out and read it whenever we can. We should read a passage every day from the Gospel, the Pope tells us, because it is the only way we can get to know Jesus.

God With Us is a unique book that can help us in our search to see Jesus and to know him. This book draws from the stories of the four Gospels and arranges them to form a single, unified narrative, a kind of biography, in which we encounter Jesus Christ, who is *Emmanuel*, God with us.

This book also provides questions for reflection and meditation that invite us to read this story prayerfully and personally, in the spirit of the ancient technique of *lectio divina* or sacred reading.

If prayer is conversation, then we need to listen to God as much as we talk to him. “When you read the Bible, God speaks to you,” St. Augustine said. “When you pray, you speak to God.” We should never read the life of Jesus as students gathering information to prepare for a test. Instead, we should read as friends who want to know everything we can about the One we love—the details of his life; what he is saying and thinking; how he responds to different situations in his life; his attitudes and feelings.

When we read the Gospels daily with prayer, our lives become a journey we are making with Jesus, a pilgrimage of the heart. The more we pray with the Gospels, the more we will have “the mind of Christ”—his thoughts and feelings, seeing reality through his eyes. The more we pray with the Gospels, the more we will feel Christ’s call to change the world—to shape society and history according to God’s loving plan.

So, I pray that *God With Us* will help you to learn to love spending time with Jesus in the reading of sacred Scripture!

There is a beautiful description of how Blessed Virgin Mary reflected on what she experienced: “But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” This is a lesson for us. We need to keep Jesus close to our heart—his words, his actions, the scenes from his life. We need to ponder them and pray about them. Just like Mary did.

May our Blessed Mother Mary accompany all of us as we come to the pages of the Gospels, seeking to see Jesus.

+ José H. Gomez

Most Reverend Jose H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles



ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI

Office of the Archbishop

Dearest Brothers and Sisters:

The mission and identity of the Church is to evangelize. That is, bring the Good News of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to all peoples without distinction. When we get started in the project of the Church, we come closer to holiness. The Saints are those who assume the life of Christ as their own. Therefore, it is necessary that we truly get to know the life of Christ in order to follow Him. With this purpose, in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis lets us know the following:

19. A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for “this is the will of God, your sanctification.” Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel.

20. That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him. At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life. It consists in uniting ourselves to the Lord’s death and resurrection in a unique and personal way, constantly dying and rising anew with him. But it can also entail reproducing in our own lives various aspects of Jesus’ earthly life: his hidden life, his life in community, his closeness to the outcast, his poverty and other ways in which he showed his self-sacrificing love. The contemplation of these mysteries, as Saint Ignatius of Loyola pointed out, leads us to incarnate them in our choices and attitudes. Because “everything in Jesus’ life was a sign of his mystery,” “Christ’s whole life is a revelation of the Father,” “Christ’s whole life is a mystery of redemption,” “Christ’s whole life is a mystery of recapitulation,” “Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us.” (Gaudete et Exsultate 19–20)

I have the pleasure of presenting this work called GOD WITH US, which was put together with great care by the Fundación Ramón Pané, to help its readers know the life of Jesus as written directly by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The texts were ordered in a harmonious and chronological format

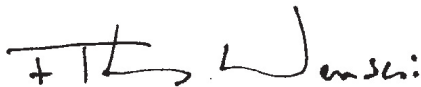
in order to help the readers to truly “follow Christ,” because in following Christ we can achieve holiness. At the end of each chapter some questions were added using the method of *lectio divina* to help the reader reflect along this path of holiness. Pope Francis, who dedicated a “Chirograph,” or excerpt in his own handwriting, for this book invites us to be disciples as well as missionaries in this work. In *Gaudete et Exsultate* he also tells us:

“Each in his or her own way” the Council says. We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness. (Gaudete et Exsultate 11).

This work also can be used as an evangelizing tool, especially by those that are first getting to know Christ. We wish it to be used especially by young people that have taken on the mission of evangelizing their peers within their social circles.

I too want to impart my blessing to those who read the Gospel and have a desire to become announcers of the Good News.

Given in Miami, April 16th, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Wenski". The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'W' and a distinct 'T'.

Archbishop Thomas Wenski
Archbishop of Miami



My life is permanent travel. God has blessed me with knowing many places in the world, especially as a missionary and evangelist. But the greatest benefit is not all the many landscapes, which undoubtedly speak of the Creator, it is the people. Meeting people from different cultures, ages, social situations, and very different ways of thinking helps me grow in this process called the Christian life.

As a disciple and missionary evangelist, I seriously wonder if we are doing as Jesus asked: “Go . . . to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples” (Matthew 28:19). The emphasis is on the imperative “go,” and I ask myself, *What have we done as disciples and missionaries with this mandate?* Maybe there is enthusiasm in many places, but I still ask myself, *Am I effective in reaching beyond those who participate in our church groups?* The *lectio divina* exercises at the end of each chapter of this book aim to reinforce our Christian vocation as disciples who become missionaries.

The Ramón Pané Foundation is very proud to put in your hands this tool that will be useful for those who know Jesus only from what others say but have not read the Gospels themselves. It is the complete story from the Gospels told chronologically. To facilitate reading, the chapter and verse numbers were eliminated; but the reference for each Scripture selection is put in parentheses for anyone interested in looking for it in the Bible.

We encourage you to become a disciple transformed into a missionary who distributes this simple tool to help many come to know Jesus from the original writings of the New Testament presented in a fresh, new, and concise way.

Courage in your walk!

Bro. Ricardo Grzona, FRP
Director General
Fraternity of Ramón Pané

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Introduction

Many people have questions about Jesus. Most people don't know much about him. They might know only what they have heard from others, but some want to find out more. They wonder if what Christians say about him is true. Can he really bring them peace? Can he bring them closer to God?

Jesus Christ was a Jew born in a small village two thousand years ago. He was a carpenter until he was about thirty years old. Then he became a teacher and healer. He traveled less than one hundred miles from his home, and his mission work lasted no more than three years. He preached about God's love and performed many miracles. He attracted a large group of followers. But the religious leaders were afraid of him, so they arrested him and, by convincing Roman authorities that Jesus was a political threat, got him executed through crucifixion.

His followers claimed that he came back to life and returned to heaven. They believed in Jesus, even though many were put in jail or killed for following him. They became known as Christians, and they spread his message throughout the world.

Why is Jesus so important?

Jesus Christ has affected history more than any other person. What he did changed the world forever. His followers are members of the world's largest religion—there are now more than two billion Christians around the world.

Jesus had a very important message. He talked about God and about life after death. He made some amazing claims about himself. Jesus said, "I have

come down from heaven to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me” because “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.”

Many people have believed in Jesus and found his promises to be true. He has brought faith, hope, and purpose to millions of people. Some people don’t believe in Jesus Christ or try to live by his teachings, but they may call themselves Christians anyway. Millions of others say that they have come to know Jesus as a real friend. And he changed their lives.

Jesus preached the Good News about God’s love for everyone. Yet some people did not believe his message. Jesus warned them. He said, “The teaching you have heard is not mine, but comes from the Father who sent me” and “Those who reject me, who do not accept my message, have one who will judge them. The words I have spoken will be their judge on the last day.”

How do we know about Jesus?

Accounts of Jesus’ life were written not long after he died. They are called Gospels (*gospel* means “good news”). These Gospel accounts became part of the Bible that we have today.

Some other Jewish and Roman writers also mention Jesus. Most history scholars today agree that Jesus really did live two thousand years ago.

There are four Gospel accounts in the Bible: these are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospel accounts came from reports by Jesus’ followers and by others who knew him.

Jesus chose twelve of his many followers to travel with him, and he called that small group his disciples. They gave personal reports about the things that Jesus said and did.

Matthew was one of the disciples. Before he met Jesus, he collected taxes for the Romans. Matthew’s Gospel was meant for Jewish people. It explains how the Jewish Scriptures told about who Jesus really is. His Gospel connects the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Mark was a young man who followed Jesus. He was not one of the disciples, but he helped Simon Peter, who was one of the disciples closest to Jesus.

The first Christians met in Mark's mother's house for prayer. His Gospel is a short history of the life and message of Jesus.

Luke was a doctor who knew the disciples. Luke may have learned from Jesus' mother, Mary, many of the things he wrote. Luke said, "Because I have carefully studied all these matters from their beginning, I thought it would be good to write an orderly account for you." Luke also wrote the book of Acts, which describes how the Christian church began.

John was another of the disciples who was a fisherman before he met Jesus. Like Matthew, John traveled with Jesus and saw the things that Jesus did. John's Gospel is about who Jesus really is and why he came. It explains that Jesus is God who became a human being to show us what God is like and to die for our sins.

Bible scholars think that Mark's Gospel was the earliest of the four—written in about AD 70. Matthew and Luke used most of Mark's Gospel in their own accounts. They also used other writings that scholars believe came from a common source.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar to each other, but John's Gospel is different. It contains many details about Jesus that are not found in the other Gospels. His Gospel was written last, around AD 90.

Before the four Gospels were written, the stories about Jesus were handed down by word of mouth. Most people were not able to read at the time of Jesus, so they remembered the sermons of well-known preachers and passed them on. The reports of what Jesus said and what he did were told over and over again.

These reports were included in the Gospels. Luke stated, "Many people have done their best to write a report of the things that have taken place among us. They wrote what we have been told by those who saw these things from the beginning and who proclaimed the message." Many of those people were still alive when the Gospels were written.

The Gospels were collected together with other writings of the early church. This collection is known as the New Testament of the Bible. It is all

about the life and message of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament contains the Hebrew Scriptures, what we sometimes refer to as the Jewish Bible.

The Christian church carefully copied and saved the New Testament. We have more copies of the New Testament sources than of any other writings from that time in history.

Jesus and his disciples spoke Aramaic, the language of the Jewish people. But the Gospel writers wrote in Greek, which was a common language of the Roman Empire.

The first English translation of the Greek New Testament was printed in the sixteenth century. The translation was brought up to date when older copies of the New Testament were found. Bible translations are revised from time to time as scholars study the original sources and changes in language.

There are now many different translations of the Bible. Some are word-for-word translations; others are more like thought-for-thought translations. Some Bibles use elegant, old-fashioned language; other Bibles use modern, everyday language.

This book uses the *Good News Translation* (GNT) of the Bible. It is a clear, modern translation that is faithful to the original texts. The Catholic edition includes several deuterocanonical books before the New Testament. Because it is written in everyday language, the Good News Bible has proved to be popular with young people.

What is this book?

This book selects verses from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and weaves them into a single story. It makes it easy to read one chronological account of the life and message of Jesus Christ in a book that is similar to a biography but uses only Scriptures from the Bible. The Scriptures used to tell the story of Jesus are indicated by parentheses at the end of each selection.

None of the four Gospels alone gives a complete picture of Jesus' life, because each Gospel writer chose to highlight different things. The details and order of the events are sometimes different. The purpose of the story was more important than the details of how, where, and when they happened.

The Gospel writers sometimes wrote about similar things happening at a different time or place. Scholars do not always agree on whether these were different events or not. It is likely that Jesus proclaimed the same message on more than one occasion.

Putting this story together required many decisions. Sometimes, when details in the Gospels differ, the text found in more than one Gospel was chosen. Otherwise, the Gospel was selected that best helps you follow the story.

You will notice that, in a few cases, we use text from the Acts of the Apostles. Although technically not a Gospel, “The Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of the Gospel according to Luke. Its chief purpose is to tell how Jesus’ early followers, led by the Holy Spirit, spread the Good News about him” (Introduction to The Acts of the Apostles, *Good News Bible*).

At the end of the book, there is a list of Bible references for events in the life of Jesus. You can use this list to find and compare each of the Gospel accounts. There is also a glossary that provides information about the people and customs in the story for readers who are new to the Bible. At the end of each chapter, there are reflections concerning vocation (your calling from God, or purpose in life), discipleship, and mission. Discussion questions are also included in case you want to go deeper.

This book is by no means intended to replace the Bible. It was written to bring the Good News of what Jesus said and did to those who otherwise might not know it. We hope you will read the message of Jesus, understand it, and be inspired to follow Jesus’ teachings and example.

God Reaches Out

In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him.

The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out. (John 1:1–5) This was the real light—the light that comes into the world and shines on all people.

The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him. Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children. They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.

The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son. (John 1:9–14) Out of the fullness of his grace he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.

God gave the Law through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:16–18)

Dear Theophilus: Many people have done their best to write a report of the things that have taken place among us. They wrote what we have been told

by those who saw these things from the beginning and who proclaimed the message. And so, Your Excellency, because I have carefully studied all these matters from their beginning, I [Luke] thought it would be good to write an orderly account for you. I do this so that you will know the full truth about everything which you have been taught.

During the time when Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife's name was Elizabeth; she also belonged to a priestly family. They both lived good lives in God's sight and obeyed fully all the Lord's laws and commands. They had no children because Elizabeth could not have any, and she and Zechariah were both very old.

One day Zechariah was doing his work as a priest in the Temple, taking his turn in the daily service. According to the custom followed by the priests, he was chosen by lot to burn incense on the altar. So he went into the Temple of the Lord, while the crowd of people outside prayed during the hour when the incense was burned.

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar where the incense was burned. When Zechariah saw him, he was alarmed and felt afraid. But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to name him John. How glad and happy you will be, and how happy many others will be when he is born!

"John will be great in the Lord's sight. He must not drink any wine or strong drink. From his very birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go ahead of the Lord, strong and mighty like the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again; he will turn disobedient people back to the way of thinking of the righteous; he will get the Lord's people ready for him."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know if this is so? I am an old man, and my wife is old also."

“I am Gabriel,” the angel answered. “I stand in the presence of God, who sent me to speak to you and tell you this good news. But you have not believed my message, which will come true at the right time. Because you have not believed, you will be unable to speak; you will remain silent until the day my promise to you comes true.”

In the meantime the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he was spending such a long time in the Temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them, and so they knew that he had seen a vision in the Temple. Unable to say a word, he made signs to them with his hands.

When his period of service in the Temple was over, Zechariah went back home. Some time later his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and did not leave the house for five months. “Now at last the Lord has helped me,” she said. “He has taken away my public disgrace!”

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a young woman promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, “Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!”

Mary was deeply troubled by the angel’s message, and she wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!”

Mary said to the angel, “I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God’s power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” said Mary; “may it happen to me as you have said.” And the angel left her.

Soon afterward Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judea. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said in a loud voice, “You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother comes to visit me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. How happy you are to believe that the Lord’s message to you will come true!”

Mary said, “My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Savior, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.

“His name is holy; from one generation to another he shows mercy to those who honor him. He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands.

“He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors, and has come to the help of his servant Israel. He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and to all his descendants forever!”

Mary stayed about three months with Elizabeth and then went back home.

The time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard how wonderfully good the Lord had been to her, and they all rejoiced with her.

When the baby was a week old, they came to circumcise him, and they were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. But his mother said, “No! His name is to be John.”

They said to her, “But you don’t have any relative with that name!” Then they made signs to his father, asking him what name he would like the boy to have.

Zechariah asked for a writing pad and wrote, “His name is John.” How surprised they all were! At that moment Zechariah was able to speak again, and he started praising God. The neighbors were all filled with fear, and the news about these things spread through all the hill country of Judea. Everyone who heard of it thought about it and asked, “What is this child going to be?” For it was plain that the Lord’s power was upon him.

John’s father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he spoke God’s message: “Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to the help of his people and has set them free. He has provided for us a mighty Savior, a descendant of his servant David. He promised through his holy prophets long ago that he would save us from our enemies, from the power of all those who hate us. He said he would show mercy to our ancestors and remember his sacred covenant. With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham he promised to rescue us from our enemies and allow us to serve him without fear, so that we might be holy and righteous before him all the days of our life.

“You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him, to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven. Our God is merciful and tender. He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us, and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death, to guide our steps into the path of peace.”

The child grew and developed in body and spirit. He lived in the desert until the day when he appeared publicly to the people of Israel. (Luke 1:1–80)

Reflections and Questions

About the Reading

Notice that in this chapter we come across two announcements: one to Zechariah and the other to Mary. He is an elderly man who can't have children; she is young and full of life, and her decision will bring life—with a capital *L*—to humanity. God sent his messenger to both of them and gave each a mission.

As with any mission, whoever is tasked with it will be fearful. But believing that everything is possible for God leads these people to say yes, even if they don't understand how everything will come about.

Mary immediately decided to serve, to go see Elizabeth and perhaps help her. Her reunion with Elizabeth takes place in a joyful setting, and it is there that “my Lord's mother” (as Elizabeth called Mary) tells the story of salvation—that is, God's intervention for his people, which now reaches its high point.

Let's Meditate

God has a mission for each of us.

- Have you considered that, like Zechariah and Mary, you also are being called by God to a certain mission or task?
- How does this reading affect your thinking about your vocation, or calling, in life?
- What does God want you to do in his name?
- Are you also afraid that God will call you to something for which you don't feel ready? If so, how can this reading inspire you to respond?
- Identify aspects of Mary and Zechariah's callings that can help you follow your own life and vocation.

Ask God

Take some time for quiet reflection. In your own words, ask God to show you, through this Gospel reading, a clear path to the calling he has revealed to you.

Think about the Main Idea

Look for the phrase in the reading that most catches your attention, and repeat it to yourself several times. You might also write it in a journal so that you can revisit it and think about it again.

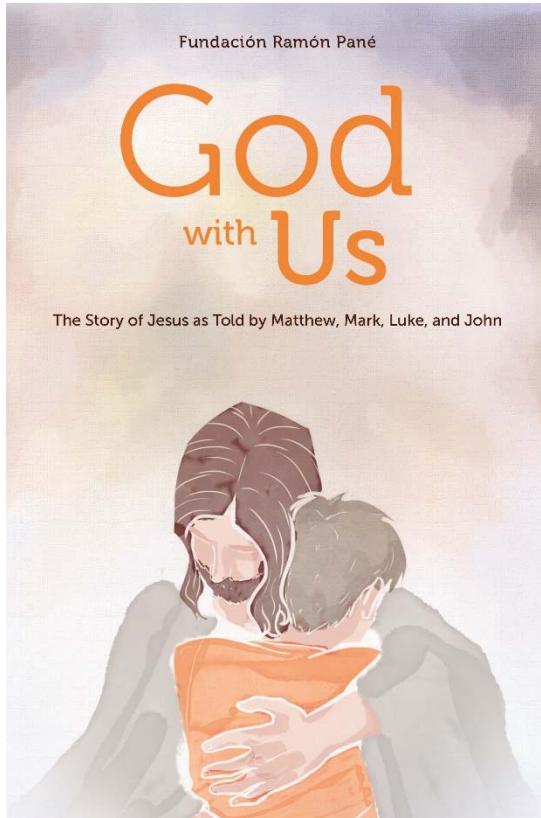
Create an Action Plan

Reading the Bible and praying with it can move us to change.

- How can this reading help you understand your calling better?
- What concrete action can you take to bring your prayer and meditation into daily life?

Discussion Questions

1. The story of Jesus begins with some words such as *life*, *light*, *children of God*, *glory*, and *grace*. Which phrase stands out the most to you? What do you find interesting about it?
2. If you were Mary, what would you be feeling and thinking about your pregnancy? In what ways would you feel blessed? How might others react to your situation?
3. Zechariah foretold that his son, John, would prepare the way for the Lord by telling people how they could find salvation. What might lead someone to feel that he or she needs salvation from something? Reflect on your own life; what do *you* need salvation from?



To learn more about ***God with Us*** or to purchase the complete book, visit www.loyolapress.com or call 800-621-1008 or email customerservice@loyolapress.com.