

I. Vatican II: Sacrosanctum Concilium:

8. In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle [22]; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory [23].

[22] Cf. *Apoc.* 21:2; *Col.* 3:1; *Heb.* 8:2.

[23] Cf. *Phil.* 3:20; *Col.* 3:4.

II. The Catechism of the Catholic Church

1074 "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows."¹³ It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. "Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men."¹⁴

1075 Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is "mystagogy.") by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the "sacraments" to the "mysteries."This Catechism, which aims to serve the whole Church in all the diversity of her rites and cultures,¹⁵ will present what is fundamental and common to the whole Church in the liturgy as mystery and as celebration, and then the seven sacraments and the sacramentals.

¹³ SC 10.

¹⁴ John Paul II, CT 23.

¹⁵ Cf. SC 3-4.

1136 Liturgy is an "action" of the whole Christ (Christus totus). Those who even now celebrate it without signs are already in the heavenly liturgy, where celebration is wholly communion and feast.

1137 The book of Revelation of St. John, read in the Church's liturgy, first reveals to us, "A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne": "the Lord God."¹ It then shows the Lamb, "standing, as though it had been slain": Christ crucified and risen, the one high priest of the true sanctuary, the same one "who offers and is offered, who gives and is given."² Finally it presents "the river of the water of life . . . flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," one of most beautiful symbols of the Holy Spirit.³

1138 "Recapitulated in Christ," these are the ones who take part in the service of the praise of God and the fulfillment of his plan: the heavenly powers, all creation (the four living beings), the servants of the Old and New Covenants (the twenty-four elders), the new People of God (the one hundred and forty-four thousand),⁴ especially the martyrs "slain for the word of God," and the all-holy Mother of God (the Woman), the Bride of the Lamb,⁵ and finally "a great multitude which no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and tongues."⁶

1139 It is in this eternal liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate whenever we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments.

¹ Rev 4:2, 8; Isa 6:1; cf. Ezek 1:26-28.

² Rev 5:6; Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora; cf. Jn 1:29; Heb 4:14-15; 10:19-2.

³ Rev 22:1; cf. 21:6; Jn 4:10-14.

⁴ Cf. Rev 4- 5; 7:1-8; 14:1; Isa 6:2-3.

⁵ Rev 6:9-11; Rev 21:9; cf. 12.

⁶ Rev 7:9.

2642 The Revelation of "what must soon take place," the Apocalypse, is borne along by the songs of the heavenly liturgy¹²⁷ but also by the intercession of the "witnesses" (martyrs).¹²⁸ The prophets and the saints, all those who were slain on earth for their witness to Jesus, the vast throng of those who, having come through the great tribulation, have gone before us into the Kingdom, all sing the praise and glory of him who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb.¹²⁹ In communion with them, the Church on earth also

sings these songs with faith in the midst of trial.

127 Cf. Rev 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12.

128 Rev 6:10.

129 Cf. Rev 18:24; 19:1-8.

“Thy Kingdom Come”

2816 In the New Testament, the word *basileia* can be translated by "kingship" (abstract noun), "kingdom" (concrete noun) or "reign" (action noun). the Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is brought near in the Word incarnate, it is proclaimed throughout the whole Gospel, and it has come in Christ's death and Resurrection. the Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst.

III. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Encyclical of Blessed John Paul II, April 17, 2003)

18. The acclamation of the assembly following the consecration appropriately ends by expressing the eschatological thrust which marks the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26): “*until you come in glory*”. The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal, a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (cf. *Jn* 15:11); it is in some way the anticipation of heaven, the “pledge of future glory”.³⁰ In the Eucharist, everything speaks of confident waiting “in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ”.³¹ Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: *they already possess it on earth*, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (*Jn* 6:54). This pledge of the future resurrection comes from the fact that the flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection. With the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the “secret” of the resurrection. For this reason Saint Ignatius of Antioch rightly defined the Eucharistic Bread as “a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death”.³²

19. The eschatological tension kindled by the Eucharist *expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in heaven*. It is not by chance that the Eastern Anaphoras and the Latin Eucharistic Prayers honour Mary, the ever-Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the angels, the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs and all the saints. This is an aspect of the Eucharist which merits greater attention: in celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly “liturgy” and become part of that great multitude which cries out: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” (*Rev* 7:10). The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.

³⁰Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, Second Vespers, Antiphon to the *Magnificat*.

³¹*Missale Romanum*, Embolism following the Lord's Prayer.

³²*Ad Ephesios*, 20: PG 5, 661.

IV. *Sacramentum Caritatis* – Pope Benedict XVI (Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist - 22 February 2007)

The Eucharist and Eschatology

The Eucharist: a gift to men and women on their journey

30. If it is true that the sacraments are part of the Church's pilgrimage through history (99) towards the full manifestation of the victory of the risen Christ, it is also true that, especially in the liturgy of the Eucharist, they give us a real foretaste of the eschatological fulfilment for which every human being and all creation are destined (cf. *Rom* 8:19ff.). Man is created for that true and eternal happiness which only God's love can give. But our wounded freedom would go astray were it not already able to experience something of that future fulfilment. Moreover, to move forward in the right direction, we all need to be guided towards our final goal. That goal is Christ himself, the Lord who conquered sin and death, and who makes himself present to us in a special way in the eucharistic celebration. Even though we remain “aliens and exiles” in this world (*1 Pet* 2:11), through faith we already share in the fullness of risen life. The eucharistic banquet, by disclosing its powerful eschatological dimension, comes to the aid of our freedom as we continue our journey.

The eschatological banquet

31. Reflecting on this mystery, we can say that Jesus' coming responded to an expectation present in the people of Israel, in the whole of humanity and ultimately in creation itself. By his self-gift, he objectively inaugurated the eschatological age. Christ came to gather

together the scattered People of God (cf. *Jn* 11:52) and clearly manifested his intention to gather together the community of the covenant, in order to bring to fulfilment the promises made by God to the fathers of old (cf. *Jer* 23:3; *Lk* 1:55, 70). In the calling of the Twelve, which is to be understood in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the command he gave them at the Last Supper, before his redemptive passion, to celebrate his memorial, Jesus showed that he wished to transfer to the entire community which he had founded the task of being, within history, the sign and instrument of the eschatological gathering that had its origin in him. Consequently, every eucharistic celebration sacramentally accomplishes the eschatological gathering of the People of God. For us, the eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets (cf. *Is* 25:6-9) and described in the New Testament as "the marriage-feast of the Lamb" (*Rev* 19:7-9), to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints (100).

Prayer for the dead

32. The eucharistic celebration, in which we proclaim that Christ has died and risen, and will come again, is a pledge of the future glory in which our bodies too will be glorified. Celebrating the memorial of our salvation strengthens our hope in the resurrection of the body and in the possibility of meeting once again, face to face, those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. In this context, I wish, together with the Synod Fathers, to remind all the faithful of the importance of prayers for the dead, especially the offering of Mass for them, so that, once purified, they can come to the beatific vision of God. (101) A rediscovery of the eschatological dimension inherent in the Eucharist, celebrated and adored, will help sustain us on our journey and comfort us in the hope of glory (cf. *Rom* 5:2; *Tit* 2:13).

The Eucharist and the Virgin Mary

33. From the relationship between the Eucharist and the individual sacraments, and from the eschatological significance of the sacred mysteries, the overall shape of the Christian life emerges, a life called at all times to be an act of spiritual worship, a self-offering pleasing to God. Although we are all still journeying towards the complete fulfilment of our hope, this does not mean that we cannot already gratefully acknowledge that God's gifts to us have found their perfect fulfilment in the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother. Mary's Assumption body and soul into heaven is for us a sign of sure hope, for it shows us, on our pilgrimage through time, the eschatological goal of which the sacrament of the Eucharist enables us even now to have a foretaste.

(99) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 48.

(100) Cf. *Propositio* 3.

(101) Here I would recall the words filled with hope and consolation found in Eucharistic Prayer II: "*Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest in the hope of rising again. Bring them and all the departed into the light of your presence.*"

Mystagogical catechesis

64. The Church's great liturgical tradition teaches us that fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated, offering one's life to God in unity with the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the whole world.... Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a mystagogical approach to catechesis, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated.... This basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a process of mystagogy which should always respect three elements:

a) *It interprets the rites in the light of the events of our salvation*, in accordance with the Church's living tradition. The celebration of the Eucharist, in its infinite richness, makes constant reference to salvation history. In Christ crucified and risen, we truly celebrate the one who has united all things in himself (cf. *Eph* 1:10). From the beginning, the Christian community has interpreted the events of Jesus' life, and the Paschal Mystery in particular, in relation to the entire history of the Old Testament.

b) A mystagogical catechesis must also be concerned with *presenting the meaning of the signs* contained in the rites. This is particularly important in a highly technological age like our own, which risks losing the ability to appreciate signs and symbols. More than simply conveying information, a mystagogical catechesis should be capable of making the faithful more sensitive to the language of signs and gestures which, together with the word, make up the rite.

c) Finally, a mystagogical catechesis must be concerned with bringing out the *significance of the rites for the Christian life* in all its dimensions – work and responsibility, thoughts and emotions, activity and repose. Part of the mystagogical process is to demonstrate how the mysteries celebrated in the rite are linked to the missionary responsibility of the faithful. The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated. The aim of all Christian education, moreover, is to train the believer in an adult faith that can make him a "new creation", capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him.

V. Verbum Domini (Apostolic Exhortation on The Word of God in the Life of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI – 9/30/10)

Sacred Scripture, inspiration and truth

19. A key concept for understanding the sacred text as the word of God in human words is certainly that of *inspiration*. Here too we can suggest an analogy: as the word of God became flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so sacred Scripture is born from the womb of the Church by the power of the same Spirit. Sacred Scripture is “the word of God set down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit”.^[66] In this way one recognizes the full importance of the human author who wrote the inspired texts and, at the same time, God himself as the true author.

As the Synod Fathers affirmed, the theme of inspiration is clearly decisive for an adequate approach to the Scriptures and their correct interpretation,^[67] which for its part is to be done in the same Spirit in whom the sacred texts were written.^[68] Whenever our awareness of its inspiration grows weak, we risk reading Scripture as an object of historical curiosity and not as the work of the Holy Spirit in which we can hear the Lord himself speak and recognize his presence in history.

The Synod Fathers also stressed the link between the theme of inspiration and that of the *truth of the Scriptures*.^[69] A deeper study of the process of inspiration will doubtless lead to a greater understanding of the truth contained in the sacred books. As the Council’s teaching states in this regard, the inspired books teach the truth: “since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures. Thus, ‘all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work’ (2 Tim 3:16-17, Greek)”.^[70]

Certainly theological reflection has always considered inspiration and truth as two key concepts for an ecclesial hermeneutic of the sacred Scriptures. Nonetheless, one must acknowledge the need today for a fuller and more adequate study of these realities, in order better to respond to the need to interpret the sacred texts in accordance with their nature. Here I would express my fervent hope that research in this field will progress and bear fruit both for biblical science and for the spiritual life of the faithful.

Our Response To The God Who Speaks - *Called to the covenant with God*

22. By emphasizing the many forms of the word, we have been able to contemplate the number of ways in which God speaks to and encounters men and women, making himself known in dialogue. Certainly, as the Synod Fathers stated, “dialogue, when we are speaking of revelation, entails the *primacy* of the word of God addressed to man”.^[71] The mystery of the Covenant expresses this relationship between God who calls man with his word, and man who responds, albeit making clear that it is not a matter of a meeting of two peers; what we call the Old and New Covenant is not a contract between two equal parties, but a pure gift of God. By this gift of his love God bridges every distance and truly makes us his “partners”, in order to bring about the nuptial mystery of the love between Christ and the Church. . . . We were created in the word and we live in the word; we cannot understand ourselves unless we are open to this dialogue. The word of God discloses the filial and relational nature of human existence. We are indeed called by grace to be conformed to Christ, the Son of the Father, and, in him, to be transformed.

^[66] Ibid., 9.

^[67] Cf. *Propositiones* 5 and 12.

^[68] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 12.

^[69] Cf. *Propositio* 12.

^[70] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 11.

^[71] *Propositio* 4.

The Interpretation Of Sacred Scripture In The Church - *The Church as the primary setting for biblical hermeneutics*

29. Another major theme that emerged during the Synod, to which I would now like to draw attention, is the *interpretation of sacred Scripture in the Church*. The intrinsic link between the word and faith makes clear that authentic biblical hermeneutics can only be had within the faith of the Church, which has its paradigm in Mary’s *fiat*.

Here we can point to a fundamental criterion of biblical hermeneutics: *the primary setting for scriptural interpretation is the life of the Church*. This is not to uphold the ecclesial context as an extrinsic rule to which exegetes must submit, but rather is something demanded by the very nature of the Scriptures and the way they gradually came into being. “Faith traditions formed the living context for the literary activity of the authors of sacred Scripture. Their insertion into this context also involved a sharing in both the liturgical and external life of the communities, in their intellectual world, in their culture and in the ups and downs of their shared history. In like manner, the interpretation of sacred Scripture requires full participation on the part of exegetes in the life and faith of the believing community of their own time”.^[86] Consequently, “since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit through whom it was written”,^[87] exegetes, theologians and the whole people of God must approach it as what it really is, the word of God conveyed to us through human words (cf. *1 Th 2:13*). This is a constant datum implicit in the Bible itself: “No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (*2 Pet 1:20-21*). Moreover, it is the faith of the Church that recognizes in the Bible the word of God; as Saint Augustine memorably put it: “I would not believe the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church led me to do so”.^[88] The Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church, enables us to interpret the Scriptures authoritatively. The Bible is the Church’s book, and its essential place in the Church’s life gives rise to its genuine interpretation.

^[86] Pontifical biblical commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (15 April 1993), III, A, 3: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, No. 3035.

^[87] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 12.

^[88] *Contra epistolam Manichaei quam vocant fundamenti*, V, 6: PL 42, 176.

The development of biblical studies and the Church’s magisterium

33. The Church’s living magisterium, which is charged with “giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of tradition”,^[100] intervened in a prudent and balanced way regarding the correct response to the introduction of new methods of historical analysis. I think in particular of the Encyclicals *Providentissimus Deus* of Pope Leo XIII and *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII. My venerable predecessor John Paul II recalled the importance of these documents on the centenary and the fiftieth anniversary respectively of their promulgation.^[101] Pope Leo XIII’s intervention had the merit of protecting the Catholic interpretation of the Bible from the inroads of rationalism, without, however, seeking refuge in a spiritual meaning detached from history. Far from shunning scientific criticism, the Church was wary only of “preconceived opinions that claim to be based on science, but which in reality surreptitiously cause science to depart from its domain”.^[102] Pope Pius XII, on the other hand, was faced with attacks on the part of those who proposed a so-called mystical exegesis which rejected any form of scientific approach. The Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* was careful to avoid any hint of a dichotomy between “scientific exegesis” for use in apologetics and “spiritual interpretation meant for internal use”; rather it affirmed both the “theological significance of the literal sense, methodically defined” and the fact that “determining the spiritual sense ... belongs itself to the realm of exegetical science”.^[103] In this way, both documents rejected “a split between the human and the divine, between scientific research and respect for the faith, between the literal sense and the spiritual sense”.^[104] This balance was subsequently maintained by the 1993 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission: “in their work of interpretation, Catholic exegetes must never forget that what they are interpreting is the *word of God*. Their common task is not finished when they have simply determined sources, defined forms or explained literary procedures. They arrive at the true goal of their work only when they have explained the meaning of the biblical text as God’s word for today”.^[105]

The Council’s biblical hermeneutic: a directive to be appropriated

34. Against this background, one can better appreciate the great principles of interpretation proper to Catholic exegesis set forth by the Second Vatican Council, especially in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*: “Seeing that, in sacred Scripture, God speaks through human beings in human fashion, it follows that the interpreters of sacred Scripture, if they are to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, that meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words”.^[106] On the one hand, the Council emphasizes the study of literary genres and historical context as basic elements for understanding the meaning intended by the sacred author. On the other hand, since Scripture must be interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written, the Dogmatic Constitution indicates three fundamental criteria for an appreciation of the divine dimension of the Bible: 1) the text must be interpreted with attention to *the unity of the whole of Scripture*; nowadays this is called canonical exegesis; 2) account is to be taken of the *living Tradition of the whole Church*; and, finally, 3) respect must be shown for *the analogy of faith*. “Only where both methodological levels, the historical-critical and the theological, are respected, can one speak of a theological exegesis, an exegesis worthy of this book”.^[107]

The danger of dualism and a secularized hermeneutic

35. In this regard we should mention the serious risk nowadays of a dualistic approach to sacred Scripture. To distinguish two levels of approach to the Bible does not in any way mean to separate or oppose them, nor simply to juxtapose them. They exist only in reciprocity. Unfortunately, a sterile separation sometimes creates a barrier between exegesis and theology, and this “occurs even at the highest academic levels”.^[109] Here I would mention the most troubling consequences, which are to be avoided.

- First and foremost, if the work of exegesis is restricted to the first level alone, Scripture ends up being *a text belonging only to the past*: “One can draw moral consequences from it, one can learn history, but the Book as such speaks only of the past, and exegesis is no longer truly theological, but becomes pure historiography, history of literature”.^[110] Clearly, such a reductive approach can never make it possible to comprehend the event of God’s revelation through his word, which is handed down to us in the living Tradition and in Scripture.
- The lack of a hermeneutic of faith with regard to Scripture entails more than a simple absence; in its place there inevitably enters another hermeneutic, a positivistic and *secularized hermeneutic* ultimately based on the conviction that the Divine does not intervene in human history. According to this hermeneutic, whenever a divine element seems present, it has to be explained in some other way, reducing everything to the human element. This leads to interpretations that deny the historicity of the divine elements.^[111]
- Such a position can only prove harmful to the life of the Church, casting doubt over fundamental mysteries of Christianity and their historicity – as, for example, the institution of the Eucharist and the resurrection of Christ. A philosophical hermeneutic is thus imposed, one which denies the possibility that the Divine can enter and be present within history. The adoption of this hermeneutic within theological studies inevitably introduces a sharp dichotomy between an exegesis limited solely to the first level and a theology tending towards a spiritualization of the meaning of the Scriptures, one which would fail to respect the historical character of revelation.

All this is also bound to have a negative impact on the spiritual life and on pastoral activity; “as a consequence of the absence of the second methodological level, a profound gulf is opened up between scientific exegesis and *lectio divina*. This can give rise to a lack of clarity in the preparation of homilies”.^[112] It must also be said that this dichotomy can create confusion and a lack of stability in the intellectual formation of candidates for ecclesial ministries.^[113] In a word, “where exegesis is not theology, Scripture cannot be the soul of theology, and conversely, where theology is not essentially the interpretation of the Church’s Scripture, such a theology no longer has a foundation”.^[114] Hence we need to take a more careful look at the indications provided by the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* in this regard.

Faith and reason in the approach to Scripture

36. I believe that what Pope John Paul II wrote about this question in his Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* can lead to a fuller understanding of exegesis and its relationship to the whole of theology. He stated that we should not underestimate “the danger inherent in seeking to derive the truth of sacred Scripture from the use of one method alone, ignoring the need for a more comprehensive exegesis which enables the exegete, together with the whole Church, to arrive at the full sense of the texts. Those who devote themselves to the study of sacred Scripture should always remember that the various hermeneutical approaches have their own philosophical underpinnings, which need to be carefully evaluated before they are applied to the sacred texts”.^[115]

This far-sighted reflection enables us to see how a hermeneutical approach to sacred Scripture inevitably brings into play the proper relationship between faith and reason. Indeed, the secularized hermeneutic of sacred Scripture is the product of reason’s attempt structurally to exclude any possibility that God might enter into our lives and speak to us in human words. Here too, we need to urge a *broadening of the scope of reason*.^[116] In applying methods of historical analysis, no criteria should be adopted which would rule out in advance God’s self-disclosure in human history. The unity of the two levels at work in the interpretation of sacred Scripture presupposes, in a word, *the harmony of faith and reason*. On the one hand, it calls for a faith which, by maintaining a proper relationship with right reason, never degenerates into fideism, which in the case of Scripture would end up in fundamentalism. On the other hand, it calls for a reason which, in its investigation of the historical elements present in the Bible, is marked by openness and does not reject *a priori* anything beyond its own terms of reference. In any case, the religion of the incarnate *Logos* can hardly fail to appear profoundly reasonable to anyone who sincerely seeks the truth and the ultimate meaning of his or her own life and history.

Literal sense and spiritual sense

37. A significant contribution to the recovery of an adequate scriptural hermeneutic, as the synodal assembly stated, can also come from renewed attention to the Fathers of the Church and their exegetical approach.^[117] The Church Fathers present a theology that still has great value today because at its heart is the study of sacred Scripture as a whole. Indeed, the Fathers are primarily and essentially “commentators on sacred Scripture”.^[118] Their example can “teach modern exegetes a truly religious approach to sacred Scripture, and likewise an interpretation that is constantly attuned to the criterion of communion with the experience of the Church, which journeys through history under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”.^[119]

While obviously lacking the philological and historical resources at the disposal of modern exegesis, the patristic and mediaeval tradition could recognize the different senses of Scripture, beginning with the literal sense, namely, “the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation”.^[120] Saint Thomas of Aquinas, for example, states that “all the senses of sacred Scripture are based on the literal sense”.^[121] It is necessary, however, to remember that in patristic and medieval times every form of exegesis, including the literal form, was carried out on the basis of faith, without there

necessarily being any distinction between the *literal sense* and the *spiritual sense*. One may mention in this regard the medieval couplet which expresses the relationship between the different senses of Scripture:

“Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.

The letter speaks of deeds; allegory about the faith; The moral about our actions; anagogy about our destiny”.^[122]

Here we can note the unity and interrelation between the *literal sense* and the *spiritual sense*, which for its part is subdivided into three senses which deal with the contents of the faith, with the moral life and with our eschatological aspiration.

In a word, while acknowledging the validity and necessity, as well as the limits, of the historical-critical method, we learn from the Fathers that exegesis “is truly faithful to the proper intention of biblical texts when it goes not only to the heart of their formulation to find the reality of faith there expressed, but also seeks to link this reality to the experience of faith in our present world”.^[123] Only against this horizon can we recognize that the word of God is living and addressed to each of us in the here and now of our lives. In this sense, the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s definition of the spiritual sense, as understood by Christian faith, remains fully valid: it is “the meaning expressed by the biblical texts when read, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the context of the paschal mystery of Christ and of the new life which flows from it. This context truly exists. In it the New Testament recognizes the fulfilment of the Scriptures. It is therefore quite acceptable to re-read the Scriptures in the light of this new context, which is that of life in the Spirit”.^[124]

The need to transcend the “letter”

38. In rediscovering the interplay between the different senses of Scripture it thus becomes essential to grasp the *passage from letter to spirit*. This is not an automatic, spontaneous passage; rather, the letter needs to be transcended: “the word of God can never simply be equated with the letter of the text. To attain to it involves a progression and a process of understanding guided by the inner movement of the whole corpus, and hence it also has to become a vital process”.^[125] Here we see the reason why an authentic process of interpretation is never purely an intellectual process but also a lived one, demanding full engagement in the life of the Church, which is life “according to the Spirit” (*Gal 5:16*). The criteria set forth in Number 12 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* thus become clearer: this progression cannot take place with regard to an individual literary fragment unless it is seen in relation to the whole of Scripture. Indeed, the goal to which we are necessarily progressing is the one Word. There is an inner drama in this process, since the passage that takes place in the power of the Spirit inevitably engages each person’s freedom. Saint Paul lived this passage to the full in his own life. In his words: “*the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life*” (*2 Cor 3:6*), he expressed in radical terms the significance of this process of transcending the letter and coming to understand it only in terms of the whole. Paul discovered that “the Spirit of freedom has a name, and hence that freedom has an inner criterion: ‘The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’ (*2 Cor 3:17*). The Spirit of freedom is not simply the exegete’s own idea, the exegete’s own vision. The Spirit is Christ, and Christ is the Lord who shows us the way”.^[126] We know that for Saint Augustine too this passage was at once dramatic and liberating; he came to believe the Scriptures – which at first sight struck him as so disjointed in themselves and in places so coarse – through the very process of transcending the letter which he learned from Saint Ambrose in typological interpretation, wherein the entire Old Testament is a path to Jesus Christ. For Saint Augustine, transcending the literal sense made the letter itself credible, and enabled him to find at last the answer to his deep inner restlessness and his thirst for truth.^[127]

The Bible’s intrinsic unity

39. In the passage from letter to spirit, we also learn, within the Church’s great tradition, to see the unity of all Scripture, grounded in the unity of God’s word, which challenges our life and constantly calls us to conversion.^[128] Here the words of Hugh of Saint Victor remain a sure guide: “All divine Scripture is one book, and this one book is Christ, speaks of Christ and finds its fulfilment in Christ”.^[129] Viewed in purely historical or literary terms, of course, the Bible is not a single book, but a collection of literary texts composed over the course of a thousand years or more, and its individual books are not easily seen to possess an interior unity; instead, we see clear inconsistencies between them. This was already the case with the Bible of Israel, which we Christians call the Old Testament. It is all the more so when, as Christians, we relate the New Testament and its writings as a kind of hermeneutical key to Israel’s Bible, thus interpreting the latter as a path to Christ. The New Testament generally does not employ the term “Scripture” (cf. *Rom 4:3*; *1 Pet 2:6*), but rather “the Scriptures” (cf. *Mt 21:43*; *Jn 5:39*; *Rom 1:2*; *2 Pet 3:16*), which nonetheless are seen in their entirety as the one word of God addressed to us.^[130] This makes it clear that the person of Christ gives unity to all the “Scriptures” in relation to the one “Word”. In this way we can understand the words of Number 12 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, which point to the internal unity of the entire Bible as a decisive criterion for a correct hermeneutic of faith.

The relationship between the Old and the New Testaments

40. Against this backdrop of the unity of the Scriptures in Christ, theologians and pastors alike need to be conscious of the

relationship between Old and the New Testaments. First of all, it is evident that *the New Testament itself acknowledges the Old Testament as the word of God* and thus accepts the authority of the sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people.^[131] It implicitly acknowledges them by using the same language and by frequently referring to passages from these Scriptures. It explicitly acknowledges them by citing many parts of them as a basis for argument. In the New Testament, an argument based on texts from the Old Testament thus has a definitive quality, superior to that of mere human argumentation. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus states that “Scripture cannot be rejected” (*Jn* 10:35) and Saint Paul specifically makes clear that the Old Testament revelation remains valid for us Christians (cf. *Rom* 15:4; *I Cor* 10:11).^[132] We also affirm that “Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew and the Holy Land is the motherland of the Church”:^[133] the roots of Christianity are found in the Old Testament, and Christianity continually draws nourishment from these roots. Consequently, sound Christian doctrine has always resisted all new forms of Marcionism, which tend, in different ways, to set the Old Testament in opposition to the New.^[134]

Moreover, the New Testament itself claims to be consistent with the Old and proclaims that in the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Christ the sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people have found their perfect fulfilment. It must be observed, however, that the concept of the fulfilment of the Scriptures is a complex one, since it has three dimensions: a basic aspect of *continuity* with the Old Testament revelation, an aspect of *discontinuity* and an aspect of *fulfilment and transcendence*. The mystery of Christ stands in continuity of intent with the sacrificial cult of the Old Testament, but it came to pass in a very different way, corresponding to a number of prophetic statements and thus reaching a perfection never previously obtained. The Old Testament is itself replete with tensions between its institutional and its prophetic aspects. The paschal mystery of Christ is in complete conformity – albeit in a way that could not have been anticipated – with the prophecies and the foreshadowings of the Scriptures; yet it presents clear aspects of discontinuity with regard to the institutions of the Old Testament.

41. These considerations show the unique importance of the Old Testament for Christians, while at the same time bringing out the *newness of Christological interpretation*. From apostolic times and in her living Tradition, the Church has stressed the unity of God’s plan in the two Testaments through the use of typology; this procedure is in no way arbitrary, but is intrinsic to the events related in the sacred text and thus involves the whole of Scripture. Typology “discerns in God’s works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son”.^[135] Christians, then, read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. While typological interpretation manifests the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament from the standpoint of the New, we must not forget that the Old Testament retains its own inherent value as revelation, as our Lord himself reaffirmed (cf. *Mk* 12:29-31). Consequently, “the New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old. Early Christian catechesis made constant use of the Old Testament (cf. *I Cor* 5:6-8; *I Cor* 10:1-11)”.^[136] For this reason the Synod Fathers stated that “the Jewish understanding of the Bible can prove helpful to Christians for their own understanding and study of the Scriptures”.^[137]

“The New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is made manifest in the New”,^[138] as Saint Augustine perceptively noted. It is important, therefore, that in both pastoral and academic settings the close relationship between the two Testaments be clearly brought out, in keeping with the dictum of Saint Gregory the Great that “what the Old Testament promised, the New Testament made visible; what the former announces in a hidden way, the latter openly proclaims as present. Therefore the Old Testament is a prophesy of the New Testament; and the best commentary on the Old Testament is the New Testament”.^[139]

The “dark” passages of the Bible

42. In discussing the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, the Synod also considered those passages in the Bible which, due to the violence and immorality they occasionally contain, prove obscure and difficult. Here it must be remembered first and foremost that *biblical revelation is deeply rooted in history*. God’s plan is manifested *progressively* and it is accomplished slowly, *in successive stages* and despite human resistance. God chose a people and patiently worked to guide and educate them. Revelation is suited to the cultural and moral level of distant times and thus describes facts and customs, such as cheating and trickery, and acts of violence and massacre, without explicitly denouncing the immorality of such things. This can be explained by the historical context, yet it can cause the modern reader to be taken aback, especially if he or she fails to take account of the many “dark” deeds carried out down the centuries, and also in our own day. In the Old Testament, the preaching of the prophets vigorously challenged every kind of injustice and violence, whether collective or individual, and thus became God’s way of training his people in preparation for the Gospel. So it would be a mistake to neglect those passages of Scripture that strike us as problematic. Rather, we should be aware that the correct interpretation of these passages requires a degree of expertise, acquired through a training that interprets the texts in their historical-literary context and within the Christian perspective which has as its ultimate hermeneutical key “the Gospel and the new commandment of Jesus Christ brought about in the paschal mystery”.^[140] I encourage scholars and pastors to help all the faithful to approach these passages through an interpretation which enables their meaning to emerge in the light of the mystery of Christ.

^[100] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10.

^[101] Cf. John Paul II, *Address for the Celebration of the Centenary of the Encyclical Providentissimus Deus and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu* (23 April 1993): AAS 86 (1994), 232-243.

^[102] *Ibid.*, 4: AAS 86 (1994), 235.

[103] Ibid., 5: AAS 86 (1994), 235.

[104] Ibid., 5: AAS 86 (1994), 236.

[105] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (15 April 1993), III, C, 1: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, No. 3065.

[106] No. 12.

[107] Benedict XVI, *Intervention at the Fourteenth General Congregation of the Synod* (14 October 2008): *Insegnamenti* IV, 2 (2008), 493; cf. *Propositio* 25.

[108] Cf. *Propositio* 26.

[109] *Propositio* 27.

[110] Benedict XVI, *Intervention at the Fourteenth General Congregation of the Synod* (14 October 2008): *Insegnamenti* IV, 2 (2008), 493; cf. *Propositio* 26.

[111] Cf. *ibid.*

[112] Ibid.

[113] Cf. *Propositio* 27.

[114] Benedict XVI, *Intervention at the Fourteenth General Congregation of the Synod* (14 October 2008): *Insegnamenti* IV, 2 (2008), 493-494.

[115] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (14 September 1998), 55: AAS 91 (1999), 49-50.

[116] Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address to the Fourth National Ecclesial Congress in Italy* (19 October 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 804-815.

[117] Cf. *Propositio* 6.

[118] Cf. Saint Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, III, XXI, 59: PL 32, 1300; *De Trinitate*, II, I, 2: PL 42, 845.

[119] Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction *Inspectis Dierum* (10 November 1989), 26: AAS 82 (1990), 618.

[120] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 116.

[121] *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 1, art. 10, ad 1.

[122] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 118.

[123] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (15 April 1993), II, A, 2: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, No. 2987.

[124] Ibid., II, B, 2: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, No. 3003.

[125] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the World of Culture at the "Collège des Bernardins" in Paris* (12 September 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 726.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Cf. Id., *General Audience* (9 January 2008): *Insegnamenti* IV, 1 (2008), 41-45.

[128] Cf. *Propositio* 29.

[129] *De Arca Noe*, 2, 8: PL 176, 642C-D.

[130] Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the World of Culture at the "Collège des Bernardins" in Paris* (12 September 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 725.

[131] Cf. *Propositio* 10; Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (24 May 2001): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 20, Nos. 748-755.

[132] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 121-122.

[133] *Propositio* 52.

[134] Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (24 May 2001), 19: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 20, Nos. 799-801; Origen, *Homily on Numbers* 9, 4: SC 415, 238-242.

[135] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 128.

[136] *Ibid.*, 129.

[137] *Propositio* 52.

[138] *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, 2, 73: PL 34, 623.

[139] *Homiliae in Ezechielem* I, VI, 15: PL 76, 836B.

[140] *Propositio* 29.

The Liturgy, Privileged Setting For The Word Of God - *The word of God in the sacred liturgy*

52. In considering the Church as “*the home of the word*”, [181] attention must first be given to the sacred liturgy, for the liturgy is the privileged setting in which God speaks to us in the midst of our lives; he speaks today to his people, who hear and respond. Every liturgical action is by its very nature steeped in sacred Scripture. In the words of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, “sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. From it are taken the readings, which are explained in the homily and the psalms that are sung. From Scripture the petitions, prayers and liturgical hymns receive their inspiration and substance. From Scripture the liturgical actions and signs draw their meaning”. [182] Even more, it must be said that Christ himself “is present in his word, since it is he who speaks when Scripture is read in Church”. [183] Indeed, “the liturgical celebration becomes the continuing, complete and effective presentation of God’s word. The word of God, constantly proclaimed in the liturgy, is always a living and effective word through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father’s love that never fails in its effectiveness towards us”. [184] The Church has always realized that in the liturgical action the word of God is accompanied by the interior working of the Holy Spirit who makes it effective in the hearts of the faithful. Thanks to the Paraclete, “the word of God becomes the foundation of the liturgical celebration, and the rule and support of all our life. The working of the same Holy Spirit ... brings home to each person individually every-thing that in the proclamation of the word of God is spoken for the good of the whole gathering. In strengthening the unity of all, the Holy Spirit at the same time fosters a diversity of gifts and furthers their multiform operation”. [185]

To understand the word of God, then, we need to appreciate and experience the essential meaning and value of the liturgical action. A *faith-filled understanding of sacred Scripture must always refer back to the liturgy*, in which the word of God is celebrated as a timely and living word: “In the liturgy the Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read and explained the sacred Scriptures, beginning with his coming forth in the synagogue and urging all to search the Scriptures”. [186]

Here one sees the sage pedagogy of the Church, which proclaims and listens to sacred Scripture following the rhythm of the liturgical year. This expansion of God’s word in time takes place above all in the Eucharistic celebration and in the Liturgy of the Hours. At the centre of everything the paschal mystery shines forth, and around it radiate all the mysteries of Christ and the history of salvation which become sacramentally present: “By recalling in this way the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens up to the faithful the riches of the saving actions and the merits of her Lord, and makes them present to all times, allowing the faithful to enter into contact with them and to be filled with the grace of salvation”. [187] For this reason I encourage the Church’s Pastors and all engaged in pastoral work to see that all the faithful learn to savour the deep meaning of the word of God which unfolds each year in the liturgy, revealing the fundamental mysteries of our faith. This is in turn the basis for a correct approach to sacred Scripture.

Sacred Scripture and the sacraments

53. In discussing the importance of the liturgy for understanding the word of God, the Synod of Bishops highlighted the relationship between sacred Scripture and the working of the sacraments. There is great need for a deeper investigation of the relationship between word and sacrament in the Church’s pastoral activity and in theological reflection. [188] Certainly “the liturgy of the word is a decisive element in the celebration of each one of the sacraments of the Church”; [189] in pastoral practice, however, the faithful are not always conscious of this connection, nor do they appreciate the unity between gesture and word. It is “the task of priests and deacons, above all when they administer the sacraments, to explain the unity between word and sacrament in the ministry of the Church”. [190] The relationship between word and sacramental gesture is the liturgical expression of God’s activity in the history of salvation through the *performative character* of the word itself. In salvation history there is no separation between what God *says* and

what he *does*. His word appears as alive and active (cf. *Heb* 4:12), as the Hebrew term *dabar* itself makes clear. In the liturgical action too, we encounter his word which accomplishes what it says. By educating the People of God to discover the performative character of God's word in the liturgy, we will help them to recognize his activity in salvation history and in their individual lives.

The word of God and the Eucharist

54. What has been said in general about the relationship between the word and the sacraments takes on deeper meaning when we turn to the celebration of the Eucharist. The profound unity of word and Eucharist is grounded in the witness of Scripture (cf. *Jn* 6; *Lk* 24), attested to by the Fathers of the Church, and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council.^[191] Here we think of Jesus' discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue of Capernaum (cf. *Jn* 6:22-69), with its underlying comparison between Moses and Jesus, between the one who spoke face to face with God (cf. *Ex* 33:11) and the one who makes God known (cf. *Jn* 1:18). Jesus' discourse on the bread speaks of the gift of God, which Moses obtained for his people with the manna in the desert, which is really the *Torah*, the life-giving word of God (cf. *Pss* 119; *Pr* 9:5). In his own person Jesus brings to fulfilment the ancient image: "The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" ... "I am the bread of life" (*Jn* 6:33-35). Here "the law has become a person. When we encounter Jesus, we feed on the living God himself, so to speak; we truly eat 'the bread from heaven'".^[192] In the discourse at Capernaum, John's Prologue is brought to a deeper level. There God's *Logos* became flesh, but here this flesh becomes "bread" given for the life of the world (cf. *Jn* 6:51), with an allusion to Jesus' self-gift in the mystery of the cross, confirmed by the words about his blood being given as *drink* (cf. *Jn* 6:53). The mystery of the Eucharist reveals the true manna, the true bread of heaven: it is God's *Logos* made flesh, who gave himself up for us in the paschal mystery.

Luke's account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus enables us to reflect further on this link between the hearing of the word and the breaking of the bread (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35). Jesus approached the disciples on the day after the Sabbath, listened as they spoke of their dashed hopes, and, joining them on their journey, "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:27). The two disciples began to look at the Scriptures in a new way in the company of this traveller who seemed so surprisingly familiar with their lives. What had taken place in those days no longer appeared to them as failure, but as fulfilment and a new beginning. And yet, apparently not even these words were enough for the two disciples. The *Gospel of Luke* relates that "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (24:31) only when Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, whereas earlier "their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (24:16). The presence of Jesus, first with his words and then with the act of breaking bread, made it possible for the disciples to recognize him. Now they were able to appreciate in a new way all that they had previously experienced with him: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (24:32).

55. From these accounts it is clear that Scripture itself points us towards an appreciation of its own unbreakable bond with the Eucharist. "It can never be forgotten that the divine word, read and proclaimed by the Church, has as its one purpose the sacrifice of the new new covenant and the banquet of grace, that is, the Eucharist".^[193] Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other: the word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist. The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist. Unless we acknowledge the Lord's real presence in the Eucharist, our understanding of Scripture remains imperfect. For this reason "the Church has honoured the word of God and the Eucharistic mystery with the same reverence, although not with the same worship, and has always and everywhere insisted upon and sanctioned such honour. Moved by the example of her Founder, she has never ceased to celebrate his paschal mystery by coming together to read 'in all the Scriptures the things concerning him' (*Lk* 24:27) and to carry out the work of salvation through the celebration of the memorial of the Lord and through the sacraments".^[194]

The sacramentality of the word

56. Reflection on the performative character of the word of God in the sacramental action and a growing appreciation of the relationship between word and Eucharist lead to yet another significant theme which emerged during the synodal assembly, that of the *sacramentality* of the word.^[195] Here it may help to recall that Pope John Paul II had made reference to the "*sacramental* character of revelation" and in particular to "the sign of the Eucharist in which the indissoluble unity between the signifier and signified makes it possible to grasp the depths of the mystery".^[196] We come to see that at the heart of the sacramentality of the word of God is the mystery of the Incarnation itself: "the Word became flesh" (*Jn* 1:14), the reality of the revealed mystery is offered to us in the "flesh" of the Son. The Word of God can be perceived by faith through the "sign" of human words and actions. Faith acknowledges God's Word by accepting the words and actions by which he makes himself known to us. The sacramental character of revelation points in turn to the history of salvation, to the way that word of God enters time and space, and speaks to men and women, who are called to accept his gift in faith.

The sacramentality of the word can thus be understood by analogy with the real presence of Christ under the appearances of the consecrated bread and wine.^[197] By approaching the altar and partaking in the Eucharistic banquet we truly share in the body and blood of Christ. The proclamation of God's word at the celebration entails an acknowledgment that Christ himself is present, that he speaks to us,^[198] and that he wishes to be heard. Saint Jerome speaks of the way we ought to approach both the Eucharist and the word of God: "We are reading the sacred Scriptures. For me, the Gospel is the Body of Christ; for me, the holy Scriptures are his teaching. And when he says: *whoever does not eat my flesh and drink my blood* (*Jn* 6:53), even though these words can also be

understood of the [Eucharistic] Mystery, Christ's body and blood are really the word of Scripture, God's teaching. When we approach the [Eucharistic] Mystery, if a crumb falls to the ground we are troubled. Yet when we are listening to the word of God, and God's Word and Christ's flesh and blood are being poured into our ears yet we pay no heed, what great peril should we not feel?" [199] Christ, truly present under the species of bread and wine, is analogously present in the word proclaimed in the liturgy. A deeper understanding of the sacramentality of God's word can thus lead us to a more unified understanding of the mystery of the mystery of revelation, which takes place through "deeds and words intimately connected"; [200] an appreciation of this can only benefit the spiritual life of the faithful and the Church's pastoral activity.

[181] *Final Message*, III, 6.

[182] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 24.

[183] *Ibid.*, 7.

[184] *Ordo Lectionum Missae*, 4.

[185] *Ibid.*, 9.

[186] *Ibid.*, 3; cf. *Lk* 4:16-21; 24:25-35, 44-49.

[187] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 102.

[188] Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), 44-45: AAS 99 (2007) 139-141.

[189] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (15 April 1993) IV, C, 1: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, No. 3123.

[190] *Ibid.*, III, B, 3: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, No. 3056.

[191] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 48, 51, 56; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 21, 26; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 6, 15; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 18; Decree on the Renewal of the Religious Life *Perfectae Caritatis*, 6. In the Church's great Tradition we find significant expressions such as "*Corpus Christi intelligitur etiam [...] Scriptura Dei*" ("God's Scripture is also understood as the Body of Christ"): Waltramus, *De Unitate Ecclesiae Conservanda*, 1, 14, ed. W. Schwenkenbecher, Hanoverae, 1883, p. 33; "The flesh of the Lord is true food and his blood true drink; this is the true good that is reserved for us in this present life, to nourish ourselves with his flesh and drink his blood, not only in the Eucharist but also in reading sacred Scripture. Indeed, true food and true drink is the word of God which we derive from the Scriptures": Saint Jerome, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, III: PL 23, 1092A.

[192] J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth*, New York, 2007, 268.

[193] *Ordo Lectionum Missae*, 10.

[194] *Ibid.*

[195] Cf. *Propositio* 7.

[196] Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (14 September 1998), 13: AAS 91 (1999), 16.

[197] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1373-1374.

[198] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7.

[199] *In Psalmum* 147: CCL 78, 337-338.

[200] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2. revelation, which takes place through "deeds and words intimately connected"; an appreciation of this can only benefit the spiritual life of the faithful and the Church's pastoral activity.