

Veritas Scripturae

The Bulletin of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild



A publication that focuses upon the doctrines
of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy —
via Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

“Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth” (Jn 17:17)



From the Director... The Dire Consequences of an Errant Bible

Sacred Scripture is the “soul” that animates the theological “body.” Hence, the Bible’s freedom from all error affects the entire deposit of faith. Consider the following current controversy.

Does the Catholic Church’s teaching that homosexual acts are objectively disordered, and intrinsically evil, depend to some extent on the trustworthiness of the chronicle on Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:1—19:29? Yes. Does the Church’s teaching rely, to some extent, on the reality of the New Testament warnings in Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Peter 2:4-10; and Jude 7? Again, yes. So while it is true that even natural law opposes homosexual acts, the fact is that supernatural revelation gives more explicit instruction. The veracity of Scripture, in this case, confirms morality.

Now, consider some practical areas that shape the people in the streets and pews. Evangelization, catechesis, and the devotional life (to name three examples) are all influenced by Scripture’s inerrancy. How do we evangelize the lost if the words and deeds of Jesus Christ are suspect? How do we catechize our children if the truths of Divine Revelation are uncertain? How do we grow spiritually if the Bible is just an embellished record?

Biblical inerrancy, no doubt, does not garner much notice today. The ecclesiastical battles in recent decades have covered other areas such as the liturgical wars, abortion and contraception debates, the inadmissibility of women to the ordained priesthood, etc. Such battles are not negligible. But the same attention must be given to the credibility of God’s word.

For sure, Catholics ought not have a one track mind, and become so fixated upon a particular topic at the expense of others which are equally important. One could call this the “heresy of specialization.” A Catholic life needs balance. If I spend time trying to reconcile the Resurrection accounts in the Gospels, then I need to spend a proportionate amount of time on my knees before the Blessed Sacrament. If I spent time trying to harmonize the number of animals taken into Noah’s Ark, then I need to spend a proportionate amount of time on the works of mercy.

But the fact remains: Biblical inerrancy always stares the Catholic in the face. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the end, stands or falls on the reliability of Divine Revelation.

Godspeed,
Salvatore J. Ciresi

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St. Jerome (A.D. 343-420) says:

“Read assiduously and learn as much as you can. Let sleep find you holding your Bible, and when your head nods let it be resting on the sacred page” (*Letter* 22.17.2; A.D. 384).

“Constantly read the Bible; in fact, have it always in your hands. Learn what you have got to teach” (*Letter* 52.7.1; A.D. 394).

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (*Commentary on Isaiah* bk. 18 prologue; A.D. 408-410).

“Love the Bible and wisdom will love you...” (*Letter* 130.20; A.D. 414).

Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Dt 6:4-9).

This extract of the Pentateuch is so important it is repeated, in part, by Jesus Himself in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34 (and underscored in Lk 10:25-28). Furthermore, the Traditional Rite of Baptism

employs this text, in part, as it follows the priest’s opening questions to the godparents: “What dost thou ask of the Church of God? Faith. What does faith bestow on thee? Life everlasting. If then thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments: thou shalt love the Lord thy God...” Such a pedigree deserves a brief examination.

The verses from Deuteronomy are known as the *Shema*, a prayer which in its complete formula is joined to 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41. This *Shema* (which is the Hebrew imperative for “Hear”) is a well known recitation from the Old Testament. Various blessings introduce and conclude the recital (cf. B. Orchard, gen. ed., *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, p. 265). The prayer reveals a host of truths; our exegesis will be limited to two points.

First: God’s oneness (Dt 6:4). The fact of monotheism had been addressed by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:32-39 and 5:6-10. God’s unity (to use a term of St. Thomas Aquinas) is now reinforced in 6:4, and later in 32:39. Other books repeat this theme (Ex 20:3; 1 Ki 8:60; Ps 18:31; Wis 12:13; Is 43:10; Hos 13:4; Mal 2:10). The New Covenant reiterates this attribute (1 Cor 8:4; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5), and reveals this God is a Trinity.

Second: we are to love God with our entire being (Dt 6:5). The notable word sequence of “heart” (*lēbāb*), “soul” (*nepes̄*), and “might” (*m^o’ōd*) calls for a total devotion to the one God. The Savior underlies this idea with the term “mind” (*dianoia*) in Matthew 22:37. This is to say, the Blessed Trinity wants intelligible and wise followers (Jn 8:31-32; Col 1:9; Jas 1:5; 2 Pet 1:2; 1 Jn 5:20).



Inerrancy Basics: The Evangelists and the Facts

The Catholic Faith, and the Divine Revelation that forms and stands behind it, is built upon real events. For this reason, the field of Apologetics, which is concerned about the historical facts in its defense of the Faith, is germane to Biblical inerrancy. Apologetical works, then, can shed light upon Scripture’s freedom from all error.

Fr. G. Duggan’s fine tome in defense of the Catholic Church, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, says: “Some have said that all that is needed as a basis for our Christian Faith is our present experience of the risen Christ. The four evangelists did not share this view, for they were at pains to provide us with information regarding his public ministry. He who was crucified and rose from the dead was none other than the Jesus of Nazareth who for three years

went about Galilee and Judea, preaching, healing the sick, driving out evil spirits and gathering around Him a group of disciples, to some of whom He gave the task of spreading the good news of the kingdom of God. St. Luke, for example, in the opening verses of his Gospel makes it clear that he intends to provide Theophilus with genuine historical information about Christ, in order that he may have certain knowledge of the facts on which his faith is based. St. Luke, therefore, did not regard it as derogatory to faith to make it depend on historical fact. Bultmann and others have held that to tie faith thus closely to the facts of history is to make faith precarious, since historical knowledge is subject to constant revision. But some historical facts are so well established as to be beyond

the possibility of doubt, and hence the essential connection of the historical facts regarding Jesus with the Christian Faith does not make that Faith precarious. So we find that St. Peter in his address to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:32-38) did not hesitate to put forward the fact of the Resurrection as his warrant for calling on his hearers to believe in Christ” (pp. 90-91).

The words and deeds found in the Gospels are rooted in real sayings and events. Recall the same New Testament’s insistence on honesty and integrity in passages such as Matthew 5:37; Romans 1:25; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9; and Revelation 14:5. Here it is — either the Apostolic writings convey the facts, or the four Evangelists have perjured themselves.

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The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. Jerome and Gospel Authorship

Gospel authorship has been given space in the last seven issues of *Veritas Scripturae*. The motivation for so much attention has been to counter, in both scholarly and popular circles, the frequent denials of the Apostolic origins of the four Gospels. This column will close this particular topic with St. Jerome (A.D. 343-420); the "Father of Biblical Studies."

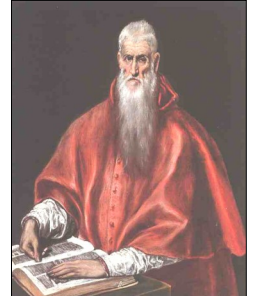
St. Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew*, written in the year A.D. 398, says in the preface: "The first of all is Matthew, the tax collector, who is also named Levi, who published a Gospel in Judea in the Hebrew language, chiefly for the sake of those from the Jews who had believed in Jesus and who were by no means observing the shadow of the Law, since the truth of the Gospel had succeeded it.

Mark is the second, the interpreter of the apostle Peter and the first bishop of the Alexandrian church, who indeed did not himself see the Lord and Savior, but he narrated the things which he had heard his master preaching, in accordance with the reliability of the events rather than their sequence. The third is Luke, the physician, a Syrian by birth from Antioch whose praise is in his Gospel, who also himself, a disciple of the apostle Paul, composed his book in the regions of Achaia and Boeotia, tracing out certain matters more deeply, and as he himself admits in the preface, describing things that had been heard rather than seen. The last is John the apostle and evangelist, whom Jesus loved very much. While reclining on the Lord's breast, he drank in the purest springs of

doctrines. He alone deserved to hear from the cross: 'Behold your mother' " (T. Scheck, trans., *Fathers of the Church* 117:53).

Here are five points to ponder. Firstly, St. Jerome's order of Gospel composition mirrors what is found in contemporary Bibles. Secondly, a Hebrew text undergirds the Greek Matthean Gospel. Thirdly, St. Mark's Gospel, not strictly chronological but nonetheless trustworthy, is linked to St. Peter's preaching. Fourthly, St. Luke is allied with St. Paul. Fifthly, the "John" who wrote the last Gospel is the very Apostle who stood at the foot of the cross with Our Lady.

St. Jerome complements the Patristic testimonies in earlier columns. Modern academia cannot ignore such voices from Tradition.



St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: Comments on Colossians 1:24

Colossians 1:24 is a verse from the hand of St. Paul that is prone to misinterpretation: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church." The Angelic Doctor offers his typical clarity and good sense in his exegesis of this Pauline verse. The text is found in *St. Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on Colossians*, translated by F. Larcher, O.P. and edited by D. Keating. The paragraph number is 61 (the quote has been reformatted).

St. Thomas writes, in part: "At first glance these words can be misunderstood to mean that the passion of Christ was not sufficient for our redemption, and that the sufferings of the saints were added to complete it. But this

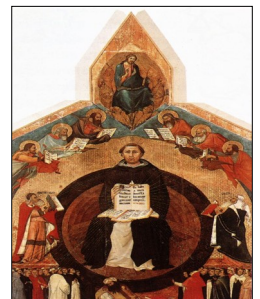
is heretical, because the blood of Christ is sufficient to redeem many worlds: 'He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 Jn 2:2).

Rather, we should understand that Christ and the Church are one mystical person, whose head is Christ, and whose body is all the just, for every just person is a member of this head: 'individually members' (1 Cor 12:27). Now God in His predestination has arranged how merit will exist throughout the entire Church, both in the head and in the members, just as He has predestined the number of the elect. And among these merits, the sufferings of the holy martyrs occupy a prominent place. For while the merits of Christ, the head, are infinite, each saint displays some

merits in a limited degree.

This is why he says, 'I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions,' that is, what is lacking in the afflictions of the whole Church, of which Christ is the head. I complete, that is, I add my own amount; and I do this in my flesh, that is, it is I myself who am suffering. Or, we could say that Paul was completing the sufferings that were lacking in his own flesh. For what was lacking was that, just as Christ had suffered in His own body, so He should also suffer in Paul, His member, and in similar ways in others.

And Paul does this 'for the sake of His body,' which is the Church that was to be redeemed by Christ... In the same way all the saints suffer for the Church, which receives strength from their example."



The Magisterium Speaks: The Literary Genres and Holy Writ

The Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible disclose a variety of writings, which the Catholic Magisterium calls “literary genres,” “patterns,” or “forms.” A genre, simply put, is a pattern of writing with its own rules for composition and comprehension. The ancient Biblical patterns aren’t always identical to those employed today. Hence, an orthodox reading of Scripture attempts to grasp the inspired author’s literary patterns used in his era, his conditions of time and culture, and his modes of speech and of feeling and of narration. Overshadowing this reading must be Scripture’s contents and unity, the Catholic Church’s perennial Tradition, and her analogy of faith (cf. W. Most, *Free From All Error*, pp. 49-51, 185). On the genres, consider several Church pronouncements.

The early Pontifical Biblical Commission response, *Concerning the Narratives in the Historical Books which have only the Appearances of Being Historical* (1905), acknowledges the possibility that the sacred writer may employ “under the guise and form of history, a parable or an allegory or some meaning distinct from the strictly literal or historical signification of the words.”

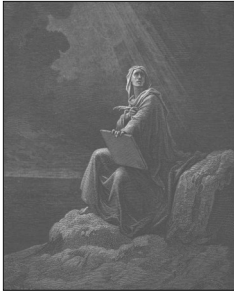
Pope Pius XII’s *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 47 (1943) speaks of genres that are “legislative, historical, sapiential and prophetic.”

The Biblical Commission’s *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* II.2 (1964) names “catechetical formulas, narrative reports, eyewitness accounts, hymns, doxologies, prayers, and similar literary genres.”

Vatican II’s *Dei Verbum* 12 (1965) mentions “historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse.” This line is cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 110 (1997).

Another Biblical Commission text, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* I.C.2 (1993), highlights “parables, allegories, anthologies and florilegia, rereadings (Fr. *relectures*), *peshet* technique, methods of associating otherwise unrelated texts, psalms and hymns, vision, revelation and dream sequences, wisdom compositions.”

The documents span various levels of authority, but each contributes to the study of the many genres. Of course, one’s pursuit of this topic must never overlook the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.



The Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Response of 1906, Part V

Associated matters on the third question of the response, *On the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch*, were covered in Part III of this column, and in “Inerrancy Basics: Sources used by the Biblical Authors” in *Veritas Scripturae* Volume 1, Number 6. Thus, all that is necessary is to supply the third question for the record:

“3. Sources — Whether it may be granted, without prejudice to the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch, that Moses employed sources in the production of his work, i.e., written documents or oral traditions, from which, to suit his special purpose and under the influence of divine inspiration, he selected some things and inserted them in his work, either literally or in substance, summarized or amplified.

Answer: In the affirmative.”

Now, the fourth question:

“4. Changes and Textual Corruptions — Whether, granted the substantial Mosaic authenticity and the integrity of the Pentateuch, it may be admitted that in the long course of centuries some modifications have been introduced into the work, such as additions after the death of Moses, either appended by an inspired author or inserted into the text as glosses and explanations; certain words and forms translated from the ancient language to a more recent language, and finally, faulty readings to be ascribed to the error of amanuenses, concerning which it is lawful to investigate and judge according to the laws of criticism.

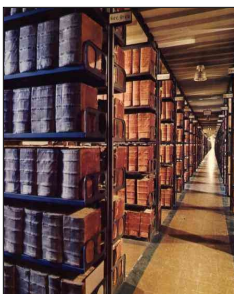
Answer: In the affirmative, subject to the judgment of the Church.”

This final question to the 1906 response acknowledges the substantial Mosaic authorship and textual intactness to the “Five Books of Moses.” But this does not deny possible amendments in the future.

Firstly, additions after Moses’ passing. One example is Numbers 12:3: “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth.” Another is Deuteronomy 34:5-6.

Secondly, certain Hebrew words and forms rendered into a more recent language. J. Steinmueller’s *A Companion to Scripture Studies* II:68 says this is true of laws used as norms for human conduct.

Thirdly, scribal errors in the transmission of the text. This seems unavoidable with hand-written, ancient documents.



Addressing Bible Difficulties: Old Testament Replication, Part II

The reconstruction of the Old Testament continues to be our focus. One ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint, has had a lasting influence on Biblical scholarship.

Catholic Bibles, such as the *Haydock Study Bible: Douay-Rheims Version* (1859), *Knox Bible* (1944-1950), *Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966), *Revised Standard Version: Second Catholic Edition* (2006), *Jerusalem Bible* (1966), *New Jerusalem Bible* (1985), and *New American Bible* (1970, 1986), make some references to this ancient translation. So do the popular non-Catholic versions such as the *New International* (1973-84), *New King James* (1982), and *New American Standard* (1995). Typical is the view of Fathers such as St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*

3.21.2; A.D. 199), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures* 4.34; A.D. 350), and St. Augustine (*City of God* 18.43; A.D. 413-426), who believed the Septuagint was inspired (although the Catholic Magisterium has never gone so far).

The Septuagint takes its name from the Latin *septuaginta* ("seventy"), and so is fittingly abbreviated LXX. This number is connected to the 70 or 72 translators tied to the origin of the text. This early history of the Septuagint is highly disputed, but interesting.

Per a *Letter of Aristeas*, dated to the Second Century B.C., King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, around 250 B.C., wanted a vernacular copy of the Old Testament for the library in Alexandria, Egypt. Therefore, the king procured 72 scholars from Palestine

(six from each of the Twelve Tribes) for Egypt, to render the Pentateuch into the Greek tongue. Additional details on the origin of the Septuagint are found in Jewish writers from the First Century A.D.: Josephus' *Antiquities* 12.2.1-15 and Philo's *On the Life of Moses* 2.5.25-7.41. What is undisputed is the Jewish people, in view of their Assyrian Exile in 722 B.C. (2 Ki 17:1-6) and Babylonian Exile in 586 B.C. (2 Ki 25:1-21), began to lose their facility with Hebrew. A Greek text was needed.

Later, this was an asset for the Faith. Most quotations of the Old Testament within the New are from the Septuagint. Also, a Greek translation was a boon for missionary work to Gentiles. As well, the Septuagint, in spots, may reflect the lost originals more accurately.



The Biblical World: Dates for the Book of Genesis

The foundational book of the Bible, Genesis, is considered the most difficult for the field of Biblical chronology. The age before Abraham, which spans Creation to the generations of Shem (Gen 1:1-11:26), poses many challenges. There have been attempts to date parts of these early chapters: consider the *Roman Martyrology*, or the Anglican James Ussher's *The Annals of the World*. Some older Catholic Bibles follow Ussher's work.

Many academic resources, when striving to reconstruct a chronology for the Bible's opening book, usually begin with Abram's call in Genesis 12:1. This is a more certain approach, although it entails some approximations as well. In spite of some guesswork, dating the events of Genesis is a worthwhile endeavor.

Below are some chronologies, with some slight adaptations. All dates, naturally, are B.C.

F. Knecht's *A Practical Commentary on Holy Scripture*, pp. 34 and 51:
2400: The Deluge.
2100: The call of Abram.

H. Daniel-Rops' *Israel and the Ancient World*, p. 405:
2000: Abraham's vocation and departure from Ur.
1800: Jacob.
1740: Joseph's Egyptian adventure.

J. Smith's *Understand the Bible: A Guide for Catholics*, appendix B:
1800: Abraham in Canaan.
1700: Joseph in Egypt.

A. Fuentes' *A Guide to the Bible*, p. 252:
1850: Abraham's election and promise.
1700: Joseph sold to slavery.

M. Duggan's *The Consuming Fire: A Christian Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 585:
1850: Abraham's call.
1600: Joseph in Egypt.

J. Jensen's *God's Word to Israel*, p. 289:
1850: Call of Abraham.
1700: Jacob to Egypt.

S. Hahn's *The Didache Series: Understanding The Scriptures, A Complete Course On Bible Study*, p. 34:
2120: God calls Abram.
1906: Jacob and sons to Egypt.
1836: Joseph dies in Egypt.

Overall, the approximations are not too divergent among the seven lists. Note well: the absence of fixed dates for Genesis 1-11 should never bring its veracity, or historicity, into doubt. This epoch will be addressed in the next issue.



Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

J. M. J.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37).

"Jesus said to them, 'Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?'" (Mk 12:24).

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He [Christ] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk 24:27).

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn 20:30-31).

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The St. Jerome Biblical Guild is an educational apostolate that explains and defends Sacred Scripture; via Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The apostolate takes its name from St. Jerome, "The Father of Biblical Studies," and labors by God's grace to accomplish the following: (1) explain the various Bible study tools and academic resources; for individual research or parish groups, (2) present studies from Scripture on specific books such as the Gospel of St. Luke, or general themes such as the Biblical roots of home-schooling, (3) promote the classic exegetical methods and insights found within Tradition; with attention to the Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas, and (4) support the Magisterial doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy; the latter the main focus of the apostolate. The Guild places itself under the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. As well, the Guild seeks the intercession of St. Jean-Marie Vianney and St. Thérèse of Lisieux for favors and protection. In all things, the apostolate seeks the greater glory of God (cf. 1 Chr 28:9; Ps 37:5; Jer 9:23-24; Jn 15:5; Col 3:17; Jas 4:13-15).

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Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi, founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild, served two tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and is now employed in the aviation sector. He earned his M.A. in Theological Studies, with a Scripture concentration, from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College, where he serves on the adjunct faculty. His other ecclesiastical activities include past co-host of 'Cross Talk,' a Catholic radio program in VA; a contributor on behalf of the Arlington Diocese to the 2005 revision to the *National Catechetical Directory*; a former board member for a private Catholic school; a past columnist for the *Arlington Catholic Herald*; and a contributor to *The Latin Mass: The Journal of Catholic Culture and Tradition*. Mr. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in VA.



Book Recommendation:

The Great Commentary of Cornelius a Lapide

The Great Commentary of Cornelius a Lapide: Vols. I-IV, trans. by Thomas W. Mossman, rev. and completed by Michael J. Miller (Fitzwilliam: Loreto, 2008) 603 pp., 767 pp., 741 pp., 820 pp.

A noteworthy publishing project has been undertaken by Loreto Publications: the extraordinary works of Biblical scholarship by the learned Jesuit — Cornelius a Lapide (1567-1637). This loyal "Companion of Jesus" produced commentaries on the whole Bible (except Job and Psalms), found in over thirty scarce Latin volumes. Loreto plans to reissue all the tomes in English. We have, to date, the Gospels.

The first volume, reviewed here, lays a foundation for the set. There is an instructive foreword by Mr. Charles Coulombe, and the preface by Lapide that follows is informative enough to be sold as

a separate pamphlet. Here is a typical excerpt: "The dignity, usefulness, and majesty of sacred scripture are so great that it surpasses the books of all philosophers and theologians, among both the Hebrews and the Greek and Latin authors, as much as divine wisdom surpasses all human wisdom. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God. It is the very utterance and speech of God, by means of which God enunciates His wisdom to us, and shows us the way to virtue, salvation, and eternal happiness" (p. xix). This outlook is worthy of imitation.

Space precludes naming all the ancillary sections placed before the actual commentary on St. Matthew; here is a sampling: "Chronology of the Life and Work of Christ," "Canons of Interpretation," "Evangelical

Counsels," "The Miracles of Christ," "Christ's Oracles and Prophecies," and "The Seven Sacraments."

Lapide was a master linguist, who fills out his exegesis with the Church Fathers and other notable commentators. This is sound theological method. As well, Lapide's sanctity is obvious; his Biblical insights reflect a deep interior union with the Savior. Consider the remarks on Matthew 4:17: "Christ, then, called men away from the world and from worldly desires, which are base, paltry, and fleeting, to heaven, so that they might reign in it as kings with God and the angels, completely happy and glorious for all eternity. For this is true wisdom, this our end, our goal, our good, our happiness."

The hardback set is about \$200 from www.LoretoPubs.org.

