



## *The Armor of Faith*

### Topic Summary: The Study and Discernment of Scripture *Part V: Scripture and the Catechism*



*Saint Jerome - by Francisco de Zurbarán*  
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### **Introduction**

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists represent a rather broad background in catechesis gained in support of various parishes as well as a variety of age and spiritual interest groups. So, welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

### **Discussion:**

During our last discussion, we addressed how discernment of spiritual context influences our understanding of the message God has for us. Even if we have the benefit of Linguistic, Positional, Historical and Cultural Context, we may still find ourselves struggling to discern what God desires for us to understand. The evil one cares not how we miss the mark in our discernment, only that we do.

In our time with scripture, there are many helps available to us from the generations which preceded us. Still, if we find ourselves struggling, then, we have one very important person to

whom we may turn to assist us and that is the Holy Spirit. As we discussed, the Holy Spirit will lead us to the truth, but our heart must also be open to listen to Him. We must also expect that our understanding may not always be immediate, but as we pray for His assistance, He will not deny us. He will lead us to His holy truth in the time in which we need it.

During these past several weeks, we discussed several different, but interrelated elements of context. While we engaged scripture to illustrate the importance of contextual discernment, we should point out that the elements we discussed can apply to almost any review of literature and the record of history.

In full disclosure, what we shared stems from my personal experience as to how scripture is misused when it is taken out of context. Many times the misuse is done unintentionally, but I can also point to a number of intentional examples as well, especially in social media discussions and documents I encounter on the Internet – you know, that world library of eternal truth. (just joking)

Today, we will take a peek into the Catechism to look at what advice it presents to us when we avail ourselves of the blessings of reading scripture. As we pointed out in previous episodes, Catholics are criticized for prohibiting the laity (the average person) from reading the Bible, so let's start there and see what instruction the Catechism provides in this regard.

(CCC: 133) The Church “forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,’ by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. ‘Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’”

**(Question 1:** In the past, the Church Councils or individual bishops have issued warnings about reading scripture. What is the nature of these warnings and are they inconsistent with this paragraph of the Catechism?)

(CCC: 108) Still, the Christian faith is not a “religion of the book.” Christianity is the religion of the “Word” of God, a word which is “not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living.” If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, “open [our] minds to understand the Scriptures.”

**(Question 2:** Here, we are told that Catholicism is not a religion of the book, but one which is of the Word of God. We are also told that is a Word which is “incarnate and living.” In what ways might we see the Word of God as “incarnate and living?")

**(Question 3:** If the Word is to live in us, then, we must not only learn it, but we must endeavor to understand the truth of what God asks of us through scripture. Given all the complexities of context we discussed, who can help open our minds to understand the message God has for us through the scriptures?)

(cf. Luke 24:44-49)

44 He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms

must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. 46 And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day 47 and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And [behold] I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

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(CCC: 109) In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.

(CCC: 110) In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. “For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.”

**(Question 4:** These paragraphs relate to us that scripture is a means by which God speaks to man in a human way, but to avoid misunderstanding, we must endeavor to discern what God wants to reveal to us through the inspired Word. As we look at what we must take into account “to discover the sacred authors' intention,” what elements of context do we see referenced here and which two are missing from the elements of context we previously discussed?)

(CCC: 111) But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. “Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written.” The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it.

**(Question 5:** Before we get into the three criteria the Second Vatican Council indicates are necessary for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it, let's revisit our contextual elements. Which contextual element is referenced here?)

(CCC: 112) 1. Be especially attentive “to the content and unity of the whole Scripture.” Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover. The phrase “heart of Christ” can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.

**(Question 6:** Here, we are told to be “attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture.” What element or elements of context might be dependent upon this criteria?)

(CCC: 113) 2. Read the Scripture within “the living Tradition of the whole Church.” According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the

Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture ("according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church").

**(Question 7:** The concept of *sola scriptura* (by scripture alone) might stand in opposition to this criteria. Why do we think the Catholic Church indicates that consideration of the "Tradition of the whole church" is important to our understanding of Scripture and which element or elements of context might this criteria be related to?)

(cf. John 21:25)

*There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.*

(cf. 1 Corinthians 11:2)

*2 I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you.*

(cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:15)

*Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.*

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(CCC: 114) 3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith. By "analogy of faith" we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

**(Question 8:** Here we are called to be attentive to the analogy of faith which is defined as the "coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation." According to our friends Merriam-Webster, the word analogy is defined as "a comparison of two otherwise unlike things based on resemblance of a particular aspect." It continues to relate that, "if two or more things agree with one another in some respects they will probably agree in others." In other words, in an analogy, we look for patterns of consistency or inconsistency from which to assess a given matter. Given these definitions, how might we use the "analogy of faith" to enable us in the discernment of scripture and what contextual element might this be related to?)

Remember our discussion concerning Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus said:

(Matthew 16:18-19)

*18 And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.*

**(Question 9:** Here, we believe that Jesus conferred authority to Peter as a leader. In what ways might we use "analogy of faith" as a means to confirm this belief? What element(s) of context is

this related to?)

(Matthew 16:19, NABRE Footnote n)

**The keys to the kingdom of heaven:** the image of the keys is probably drawn from *Is 22:15–25* where Eliakim, who succeeds Shebna as master of the palace, is given “the key of the House of David,” which he authoritatively “opens” and “shuts” (*Is 22:22*).

**Whatever you bind...loosed in heaven:** there are many instances in rabbinic literature of the binding-loosing imagery. Of the several meanings given there to the metaphor, two are of special importance here: the giving of authoritative teaching, and the lifting or imposing of the ban of excommunication. It is disputed whether the image of **the keys** and that of binding and loosing are different metaphors meaning the same thing. **In any case, the promise of the keys is given to Peter alone.** In *Mt 18:18* all the disciples are given the power of binding and loosing, but the context of that verse suggests that there the power of excommunication alone is intended. That **the keys** are those to the **kingdom of heaven** and that Peter’s exercise of authority in the church **on earth** will be confirmed **in heaven** show an intimate connection between, but not an identification of, the church and the **kingdom of heaven**.

(cf. Acts 1:15-26 where Peter lead the process for selecting a replacement for Judas and Acts 15:1-8 where Peter rendered the decision, as guided by the Holy Spirit, concerning the law applied to the Gentiles.)

### Quotes:

Saint Paul tells us, "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" [2 Cor 3:6]. A man has been killed by the letter of the Sacred Scripture when he wants to quote it only so that people will think him to be very learned, . . . when he has no desire to follow the spirit of Sacred Scripture, but wants to know what it says only so he can explain it to others.

– St. Francis of Assisi

The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind’s eye. In it we see our inner face. From the Scriptures we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection.

– *Saint Gregory the Great*

We can't have full knowledge all at once. We must start by believing; then afterwards we may be led on to master the evidence for ourselves.

– *St. Thomas Aquinas*

### Final Thoughts:

During our discussion today, we began to look within the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the guidance it offers to us concerning the reading of scripture. We are clearly encouraged to spend time with scripture beyond what we hear at Mass. Indeed, we cannot fully understand the blessings of our faith without reading the inspired Word and discerning what God desires that we understand.

As we continue to mention during our discussions, reading Scripture presents a variety of challenges, but leaving the Bible closed is not the answer to the avoidance of misinterpretation, for there is no means to interpret what is not opened. If we are to bring into our heart what sacred Scripture contains, then, we must spend time there, but let us consider the advice of the Church, in its teaching role, rather than simply going it alone.

Next time, we will look a little further in the Catechism as to its instruction concerning the “senses of scripture” and how this may influence our capability to understand the message of God to His faithful.

**Wrap Up:** Well, once more our hour has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with Part VI or our analysis concerning the Study and Discernment of Scripture as we begin to look at the “senses of scripture” as they are addressed within the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

**Next Session:** The Study and Discernment of Scripture – Part VI: The Senses of Scripture