12th Sunday after Pentecost (Old Vulgate is the Bible)

“At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.”

1. When St. Augustine was struggling to convert and embrace Lady Continence, sitting in the orchard weeping from the strain of it all, he heard a child’s voice singing out to him: “Tolle Lege! Tolle Lege!” ... “Take up and read... take up and read.” He did. He took up the Sacred Scriptures and randomly opened to Romans, reading this passage: "let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences” (13:13-14).

2. We have Divinely Revealed Truth that has been written down for our eyes to see and our ears to hear, the Sacred Scriptures. These Scriptures are words from God, sure and certain. They are Sacred and Holy. So much so the saints would only read them kneeling down after much prayer. St. Thomas Aquinas, the universal doctor of the Church, the angelic doctor, would weep and pray if he did not understand some passage, begging heaven to enlighten him... and heaven did!!

3. This is the Book of books, the Holy Bible. It is the book you prepare to read not haphazardly but with piety, devotion and faith. Every word counts... Everything is filled with layers upon layers of meaning.

4. I remember a good professor in seminary explaining to me that the Sacred Scripture is the book of Theology... it is why we work so hard in all our classes... to come to know this book and read it properly.

5. I remember listening to the conversion story of Nabeel Qureshi, found in his book “Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus.” In this work he recounts how once when he was a child, the Koran was accidentally pushed off the table. His mother leaped down to catch it as if it were a precious and priceless treasure. The children were punished for their negligence. She did this for the Koran... a book that is not divinely inspired. How much more ought we to treat the Holy Bible with the utmost reverence which is truly from God.
6. Part of the trouble is, in our times, the Holy Bible has been subjected to all kinds of irreverent scrutiny and scientific methods, such as those of the historical critical kind. How come the Koran has never been subjected to such methods?? Because of this an inversion has happened. Science has taken precedence over the faith, with the result that the Holy Book is now looked down upon. Now we have all sorts of versions, usually with the word NEW in them… New English Bible, New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible, or the Nova Vulgata. Or they will use the word Revised… Revised Standard Version, and so on, as if the Word of God can be new or revised. All this is a scandal! It is saying to the world that we cannot agree on what this Book says.

7. Apart from the rationalistic historical critical methods, this sad state of affairs has other causes, such as the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls or a change in principles that allowed different texts, such as the Hebrew Masoretic Text, to take first place as Martin Luther wanted it. As everyone should know, there are many existing fragments and codices of the Scriptures gathered from various ancient libraries in ancient languages that survived the numerous persecutions and wars. How to use them to determine what is original and what is not has been the challenge... but should it be?! When a multiplicity of possibilities touches on something essential, the proper authority, established by Christ Himself, has to intervene and show us what to do. And this has indeed happened, especially at the Council of Trent. And it is very helpful and edifying to see what the Church.

8. In the 4th Session of the Council of Trent, the issue of the Sacred Scriptures themselves was considered in response to the Protestant revolt. After listing the divinely inspired books of the Bible, something, by the way, that is not revealed in the Bible itself and needs authority to determine, the Council stated: “If anyone does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition, and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema.” Notice two things here: (i) the Council links the list of inspired books as they are found in their entirety in a certain bible...namely, the OLD Latin Vulgate, the one purified by St. Jerome. (ii) The Council does not advocate any
new version or revision of the Bible but rather sticks with what has been blessed by fruitful and continual use down through the ages, employing the descriptive OLD to the Latin Vulgate. Hmm.

9. The Council repeats itself a little later in the same session: “Moreover, the same holy council considering that not a little advantage will accrue to the Church of God if it be made known which of all the Latin editions of the sacred books now in circulation is to be regarded as authentic, ordains and declares that the old Latin Vulgate Edition, which, in use for so many hundred years, has been approved by the Church, be it in public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions held as authentic, and that no one dare or presume under any pretext whatsoever to reject it.”

10. In the official closing oration at the Council we hear this: “... this holy council scrupulously and prudently enumerated, after the example of the most approved ancient councils, the books of the Old and New Testaments which must be accepted without a doubt; and that no difficulty might arise as regards the wording of various translations, it [this Council] approved a trustworthy and certain translation from the Greek and Hebrew [i.e., the old Latin Vulgate].” St. Jerome used the ancient sources, and this is what authority has determined is the safest Bible... Always has been too... until now. Hmmmmm.

11. I know a good and pious priest who has a SSL as well as an STD. He explained to me the importance of these teachings of Trent and their utter neglect since the Protestant rationalistic techniques such as historical criticism has been applied to the Scriptures. He gave me this helpful analogy: Traditionally, the Church has considered the Old Vulgate to be the Bible, authentic, trustworthy, certain and time tested. It, therefore, acts like a screen for all other fragments and codices, including things like the Dead Sea Scrolls, to be filtered. They are put on the screen and shaken. What remains is the gold... the authentic, trustworthy and certain passages from those sources. Remember... the Council with authority said the Vulgate contains the entirety of the Scriptures.

12. To verify this statement, we need only look to the Index of Forbidden Books as formulated right after Trent: one instruction about the Bible and studying various sources, reads thus: “Translations of the books of the Old Testament may in the judgment of the bishop be permitted to learned and pious men only, provided such translations are used only as
elucidations of the Vulgate Edition for the understanding of the Holy Scriptures and not as the sound text” (Ten Rules on Prohibited Books, Trent). This is the screen! All this seems to have been ignored just as so many other things of Tradition. Recent leaders in the Church have seemingly violated the warnings and teachings of Trent by putting together a Nova Vulgata! And not surprisingly we have a wide variety of other new versions as well. I strongly suspect much of this has to do with evolution and Chardin’s concepts of complexification.

13. “Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.” We are able to see and hear what so many have longed for in the most trustworthy, authentic, and certain way using the Old Latin Vulgate. And the best translation we have of that in our native language is the Douay Rheims Bible, which has been time tested and fruitful. To partake of this fruit, we too need to do as St. Augustine heard so long ago: “Tolle lege! Tolle lege!” This helped him to overcome his vice to become the great Father and Doctor of Grace. St. Thomas gives as one of the remedies “against lust is the study of the Scriptures.” “Love the study of Holy Writ,” says St. Jerome to the monk Rusticus, “and thou wilt not love the vices of the flesh.” Let us take up this version with assurance and simplicity of faith that we are indeed reading the authentic Scriptures.

14. A few difficulties sometimes occur to people: (i) the Douay is not always easy to understand or to read. I say to this difficulty: GOOD! That is a sign that you are getting a feel for the authentic text and not someone’s idea of what it means. This is the Holy Bible... it must be approached on our knees...and understanding of those difficult passages will only come after prayer, sacrifice and humility, tears and further study. This is what St. Thomas had to do!

15. (ii) Some say to read many different versions of the Bible to get a feel for the original. I have heard this and understand what is being said here, but the Council of Trent seems to militate against this method. Such a method makes our minds the screen that determines what the authentic text is... rather than the Old Latin Vulgate which the Council made our screen, describing it as authentic, trustworthy, certain.
16. (iii) Some neglect reading the Scriptures it seems because they are not very exciting or relevant. Thus, many have turned to other sources of revelation, whether they be private revelations or even devils speaking through a possessed soul like Anneliese Michel. Yet, each and every authentic private revelation only helps to understand public revelation, which is Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Thus, to avoid falling for false apparitions, one needs to know the Holy Bible. You cannot have one without the other. Furthermore, this same Sacred Writings say over and over that His Majesty silenced the demons when they tried to speak. The Rite of Exorcism similarly declares that demons are not to be conversed with, limiting what the exorcist can ask to five basic questions. Why do we think it is now okay to listen to them or learn from them? His Majesty is our Teacher... not devils.

17. The 19th Century Leo Dupont, the Holy Man of Tours, the one through whom we have the powerful devotions of reparation to the Holy Face of Jesus, very much honored the Sacred Scriptures. His first biographer, a priest of the chapter in Tours, wrote of this devotion: “Leo Dupont wished ever to expiate the crime of blasphemy daily committed by the unbelieving, and by ignorant Christians, who deny the divine inspiration of our Holy Bible and see in it mere human and ordinary utterances. ‘Scripture,’ he said, ‘is the Face of God; before that Face, as before the Holy Face, the fire ought to burn day and night [thus he put light before both of them in his house, in the place he set aside to pray]. I see Jesus Christ whole and entire in each word of the Bible. Jesus Christ cannot be divided” (Life of Leo Dupont, TAN, p. 174). Of this lamp he wrote to a friend: “Today when I placed for the first time a lamp before the Holy Bible, I remarked the appropriateness of the words of the 118th Psalm, ‘I entreated Thy Face with all my heart; have mercy on me according to Thy word.’ The lamp is at the corner of my bureau, facing my large Bible and I, miserable creature, am between the two lights in reparation for blasphemy.” (idem). Let us imitate this holy man through whom God worked so many miracles before the image of His Holy Face by always treating the Sacred Scriptures with fitting reverence.

18. I would like conclude today by once again turning to an admonition of the Council of Trent (4th Session) regarding the Sacred Scriptures: “wishing to repress that temerity, by which the words and sentences of
sacred Scripture are turned and twisted to all sorts of profane uses, to wit, to things scurrilous, fabulous, vain, to flatteries, detractions, superstitions, impious and diabolical incantations, sorceries, and defamatory libels; (the Synod) commands and enjoins, for the doing away with this kind of irreverence and contempt, and that no one may hence forth dare in any way to apply the words of sacred Scripture to these and such like purposes...” (Council of Trent, 4th Session). “Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see... and to hear the things that you hear...” “Tolle Lege! Tolle Lege!”