Introduction: Can Everyone Interpret the Bible According to Their Own Judgment?

Few questions are as important for understanding the identity of the Catholic Church as this one: **Who has the authority to interpret Sacred Scripture authentically?**

Today, we live in an age in which the Bible is accessible to everyone. All it takes is opening an application, visiting a website, or purchasing a pocket edition to have access to the same texts that have nourished the faith of generations of Christians for centuries.

This is undoubtedly a blessing. The Church has always encouraged the reading of the Word of God, promoted knowledge of Scripture, and desired that the faithful find spiritual nourishment in it.

However, alongside this easy access, a considerable difficulty has emerged: **it is increasingly common for the same biblical passage to be used to defend completely opposing interpretations.**

Some invoke Scripture to justify a doctrine; others use exactly the same passage to challenge it. Some maintain that personally reading the Bible is sufficient to discover the entirety of Christian truth. Others believe that no ecclesiastical authority can determine what a sacred text actually means.

But is this what the Bible itself teaches?

Did Jesus Christ entrust the Scriptures to a multitude of independent interpreters, each authorized to establish the meaning of Revelation for themselves? Or did He establish a Church to which He entrusted the mission of preserving, teaching, and faithfully transmitting the truth it had received?

The Catholic answer does not arise from a desire to control the reading of the Bible or from distrust of the intelligence of the faithful. It arises from a much deeper conviction: **Sacred Scripture was not entrusted to a community without authority, but to a Church founded by Jesus Christ, assisted by the Holy Spirit, and charged with safeguarding the deposit of faith.**

Therefore, to understand why the Catholic Church possesses the authority to interpret the Bible authentically, we must return to the very origins of Christianity.

1. Jesus Christ Did Not Write a Book: He Founded a Church

There is a historical and theological fact worth remembering from the outset: Jesus Christ personally left no written book.

He did not compose a Gospel, prepare a catechism, or hand His disciples a volume containing, in an orderly fashion, all the teachings they were to transmit to future generations.

Instead, He called the Apostles, instructed them, conferred authority upon them, and sent them out to preach.

Christianity therefore began as an apostolic community that received a mission and a message. The preaching of the Apostles preceded the writing of the books of the New Testament.

The Gospel itself shows how Jesus conferred a particular authority upon His Apostles.

In Matthew 16:18–19, we find some fundamental words:

“You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

These words are not a secondary detail. Christ announces that He will build His Church and entrusts Peter with the keys of the Kingdom, a sign of authority received from Him.

Later, in Matthew 18:18, He extends the authority to bind and loose to the Apostles.

And after His Resurrection, He entrusts them with a universal mission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations […] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Let us observe something important: Jesus does not simply tell them to distribute His teachings so that each person may freely decide what they mean. He commissions them to teach what He has commanded.

The authority of the Apostles does not originate in themselves. They are not the owners of

Revelation, nor can they modify it according to their preferences. They are servants of a truth they have received.

This distinction is essential: **the Church does not possess authority over the Word of God as though she could dispose of it arbitrarily; she possesses the authority to safeguard it, transmit it, and authentically teach its meaning.**

Ecclesiastical authority is therefore an authority received from Christ and subject to the Revelation it is entrusted to preserve.

2. The Bible Itself Teaches That Personal Interpretation Alone Is Not Enough

One of the most important arguments for understanding this question appears in the Second Letter of Saint Peter:

“No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20).

This passage must be read carefully. In its context, Saint Peter is speaking about the origin of prophecy and explains that it does not come from human will, but that men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, it would be imprecise to use this verse, isolated from its context, as though it constituted an absolute prohibition against Christians personally studying or interpreting the Bible.

Nevertheless, it does express a fundamental truth: **the Word of God cannot be reduced to a subjective interpretation detached from its divine origin and from the faith received by the Church.**

Scripture itself offers other even more explicit examples.

In Acts 8:26–35, we find the encounter between the deacon Philip and an Ethiopian official who was returning from Jerusalem.

The man was reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip approached him and asked:

“Do you understand what you are reading?”

The Ethiopian's response is particularly significant:

"How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:30–31).

Philip then explains the passage and proclaims Jesus Christ to him.

This episode does not mean that no one can understand the Bible without the immediate assistance of an ordained minister. Nor does it, by itself, establish the entirety of Catholic doctrine concerning interpretative authority.

But it illustrates a reality that runs throughout the history of salvation: **the Word of God needs to be transmitted, explained, and understood within the community of faith.**

Another particularly revealing text is 2 Peter 3:15–16. Saint Peter speaks of Saint Paul's letters and warns that some passages in them are difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Here we encounter a problem that remains relevant today: the possibility of distorting the meaning of Scripture.

Not every interpretation that quotes the Bible is necessarily true. Not every argument that uses a biblical verse demonstrates fidelity to Revelation.

Quoting Scripture does not automatically mean interpreting it correctly.

3. The Church Existed Before the Bible Was Complete

This is one of the most important historical arguments and, nevertheless, one of the least known among many Christians.

When the Apostles began preaching the Gospel, the New Testament did not yet exist as a complete collection of books.

The first Christians received the faith through apostolic preaching, the celebration of the Eucharist, the teaching of the Apostles, and the life of the earliest Christian communities.

The Acts of the Apostles describes this reality:

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

This description is extraordinarily important. The first Christian community was not organized around the individual interpretation of a book, but around apostolic teaching, ecclesial communion, the liturgy, and prayer.

The writings of the New Testament emerged within this apostolic Church. The Gospels, letters, and other inspired writings circulated among Christian communities and were received, read, and preserved as testimonies of Revelation.

Subsequently, the Church recognized which writings truly belonged to the canon of Sacred Scripture.

This does not mean that the Church granted divine inspiration to texts that did not previously possess it. **The Church did not make the biblical books inspired: she recognized and proclaimed which books were inspired by God.**

The distinction is fundamental.

The authority of the Church does not consist in creating the Word of God, but in recognizing and safeguarding it.

Who Determined Which Books Belonged to the Bible?

The question of the biblical canon constitutes an extremely important historical argument.

During the first centuries, Christian writings of various kinds existed: Gospels, letters, apostolic writings, edifying texts, and other documents whose authority was disputed or not universally recognized.

The Church had to discern which writings were genuinely apostolic and inspired, and which should not form part of Scripture.

This process did not take place through a single, instantaneous decision, nor was it free from difficulties. It was a historical process of ecclesial reception and discernment.

Among the important testimonies are the Council of Rome of the year 382, traditionally associated with the transmission of the so-called Decretum Gelasianum, whose textual history requires caution; the regional Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397 and 419); and, subsequently, the definitions of the Council of Florence and the Council of Trent.

The Council of Trent, in its fourth session, held on April 8, 1546, solemnly confirmed the

canon of the sacred books received by the Church.

The consequence is highly significant:

Anyone who claims that the Bible is the sole religious authority, while rejecting every authority of the Church to recognize the canon of its books, faces a historical and logical difficulty: they must explain where the certainty comes from that those particular books constitute the Bible.

The Church is not an addition that appeared after Scripture. She is the apostolic community within which Scripture was transmitted, recognized, and preserved.

4. Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium: Three Inseparable Realities

To understand Catholic doctrine correctly, we must know three fundamental concepts:

- **Sacred Scripture:** The Word of God committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- **Sacred Tradition:** The living transmission of Revelation entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and handed down by their successors.
- **The Magisterium:** The teaching authority entrusted to the bishops in communion with the Successor of Peter to authentically interpret the Word of God.

These are not three independent sources of revelation that can contradict one another.

They are three closely related realities within one single deposit of faith.

The Second Vatican Council, in its dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, promulgated on November 18, 1965, explains this relationship with extraordinary clarity.

In paragraph 10, it teaches that Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God, entrusted to the Church.

And it adds a decisive statement:

“The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church.”

The same constitution immediately clarifies that this Magisterium is not above the Word of God, but serves it.

Its mission consists in listening to it devoutly, guarding it carefully, and explaining it faithfully.

This statement refutes two opposing errors.

The first consists in believing that each individual possesses absolute authority to establish the meaning of Revelation, independently of the faith received from the Apostles.

The second consists in imagining that the Church can modify Revelation at will, inventing doctrines or contradicting the teachings she has received.

Neither of these positions is Catholic.

The Church is not the owner of Revelation: she is its custodian.

The Magisterium cannot legitimately teach something contrary to the Word of God. Its authority consists precisely in preserving the integrity of the message received.

What Does It Mean for the Magisterium to Have the Final Word?

It means that, when it comes to authentically establishing what Revelation teaches in matters of faith and morals, it is not up to each individual, community, or theological movement to constitute itself as the supreme authority.

That responsibility belongs to the Magisterium of the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church develops this teaching in paragraphs 85–87.

Paragraph 85 explains that the authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether written or transmitted through Tradition, has been entrusted to the living Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the bishops in communion with the Successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

Paragraph 86 recalls that this Magisterium is the servant of the Word, not its superior.

And paragraph 87 relates this authority to the words of Christ:

“He who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16).

We are therefore not dealing with a medieval invention or an administrative claim that arose to control the faithful.

We are dealing with a teaching solemnly expressed by the Magisterium of the Church and grounded in the mission Christ entrusted to the Apostles.

5. The Early Christians Already Fought Against Distorted Interpretations of Scripture

Concern for preserving the true interpretation of the faith did not appear during the Middle Ages, nor did it begin with the controversies of the Protestant Reformation.

It has been present since the earliest centuries of Christianity.

The early Church Fathers had to confront numerous groups that used particular biblical texts to defend doctrines contrary to the apostolic faith.

One of the most important examples is Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, a second-century bishop.

In his work *Against Heresies*, written against various Gnostic movements, he defended the continuity between apostolic preaching and the faith transmitted by the Churches founded by the Apostles.

His argument did not consist simply of accumulating biblical verses. He also appealed to the succession of bishops and to the public tradition received from the Apostles.

Why?

Because the groups he opposed claimed to possess secret knowledge and special teachings which, according to them, allowed them to interpret the Scriptures differently from the common faith of the Church.

Saint Irenaeus defended the principle that the true faith could not depend on invented private revelations or interpretations detached from apostolic tradition.

His testimony is extraordinarily valuable: it shows that, as early as the second century, the Church understood that the interpretation of Scripture had to remain connected to the faith received from the Apostles.

Another important testimony is Saint Vincent of Lérins, a fifth-century monk.

In his *Commonitorium*, especially chapter 2, he develops a criterion for distinguishing Catholic doctrine from doctrinal novelties: preserving what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all, understanding this formula as an expression of the principles of universality, antiquity, and consensus in the Catholic faith.

This criterion does not mean that the Church cannot deepen her understanding of doctrine. It means that such development can never become a contradiction of the faith received.

The Church can explain a truth with greater precision, respond to new controversies, and develop her theological understanding, but she cannot replace Revelation with something different.

The true Catholic interpretation does not invent a new faith: it makes explicit, defends, and transmits faithfully what God has revealed.

6. The Council of Trent and the Response to Private Interpretation of Scripture

During the sixteenth century, the question of interpretative authority acquired particular importance because of the rupture of Christian unity in the West and the controversies of the Protestant Reformation.

One of the principles defended by various reformers was *sola Scriptura*, according to which Scripture constitutes the sole infallible rule of faith.

It is worth clarifying that the different Protestant traditions have not maintained exactly the same positions regarding biblical interpretation, the authority of confessions of faith, and Christian tradition.

Nevertheless, the fundamental issue separating Catholics and the Reformers concerned the relationship between Scripture, Tradition, and ecclesiastical authority.

The Catholic Church responded solemnly at the Council of Trent.

In its fourth session, held on April 8, 1546, the Council promulgated a decree concerning the sacred books and another concerning their use and interpretation.

In the latter, it established that no one, relying on their own skill, should interpret Sacred Scripture in matters of faith and morals contrary to the meaning that Holy Mother Church has held and holds, since it is her responsibility to judge its true meaning and interpretation, nor contrary to the unanimous consensus of the Fathers.

This provision must be understood correctly.

Trent did not prohibit studying the Bible, researching its original languages, examining its historical context, or developing theological explanations.

Nor did it declare that every personal interpretation of a biblical text was automatically heretical.

What it rejected was the claim to establish interpretations in matters of faith and morals that contradicted the faith of the Church and present them as legitimate Christian doctrine.

The Council thus defended an essential truth: **the interpretation of Scripture cannot be separated from apostolic Tradition or from the doctrinal judgment of the Church.**

This principle remains in force today.

Not because Catholics should be afraid to read the Bible, but because they must avoid allowing their reading to become subject to arbitrary interpretations that ultimately destroy the unity of the faith.

7. Does This Mean That a Catholic Cannot Personally Interpret the Bible?

Absolutely not.

This is one of the misunderstandings that must be clarified with particular firmness.

The Church does not teach that the faithful should refrain from reading, studying, or personally deepening their understanding of Sacred Scripture.

Quite the opposite.

The Second Vatican Council, in *Dei Verbum*, paragraph 25, strongly recommends that all the faithful acquire frequent knowledge of the Scriptures through spiritual reading and diligent

study.

Saint Jerome, one of the great Doctors of the Church and the translator of the Bible into Latin in the textual tradition known as the Vulgate, defended throughout his life and work the importance of knowing the Scriptures.

Personal biblical reading is necessary to nourish faith, strengthen spiritual life, and know Jesus Christ more deeply.

So where is the difference?

It lies in distinguishing between **studying and interpreting a text** and **possessing the authority to establish its meaning doctrinally, authentically, and in a way that is binding upon the entire Church.**

A member of the faithful can study the Gospel of Saint John, investigate the meaning of a Greek expression, consult patristic commentaries, or develop a spiritual reflection on a parable.

A priest can explain a passage during a homily. A theologian can develop research on Saint Paul. A biblical scholar can offer a historical or literary interpretation of a text.

All of this is legitimate and necessary.

But none of them, simply by virtue of being a priest, theologian, researcher, or believer, automatically possesses the authority of the Magisterium.

A particular interpretation cannot be imposed as Catholic doctrine when it contradicts the faith received and taught by the Church.

Doctrinal authority does not depend on the popularity of a preacher, the number of followers of an Internet channel, or the rhetorical brilliance of someone presenting a particular explanation.

It depends on the mission received by the Church and on fidelity to the deposit of faith.

8. How Should Sacred Scripture Be Properly Interpreted?

The Church does not merely claim authority to interpret the Bible. She also provides the principles that should guide a genuinely Catholic reading.

The Second Vatican Council devotes paragraph 12 of *Dei Verbum* to this question.

It establishes several fundamental criteria.

1. Respect the Intention of the Sacred Author

God is the principal author of Sacred Scripture, but He chose to make use of human beings who wrote using their own faculties and abilities.

Therefore, to understand a passage correctly, we must investigate what the human author intended to express and what God intended to communicate through his words.

This requires paying attention to the historical circumstances, customs, culture, and literary forms of the period.

We cannot interpret a psalm, a parable, a historical narrative, a letter of the Apostles, or a prophetic text in exactly the same way.

Ignoring literary genre can lead to mistaken interpretations.

2. Read Each Passage Within the Unity of All Scripture

The Bible is not a collection of independent writings that can contradict one another.

Although it was written by different human authors, in different periods and through diverse literary genres, God is its author, and it possesses a profound unity.

For this reason, no verse should be used to destroy the meaning of other passages.

An interpretation that clearly contradicts the entirety of Revelation must be examined with particular care.

For example, it would not be legitimate to use a passage about divine mercy to deny the existence of judgment, or to invoke a text about God’s justice in order to deny His mercy.

Both realities belong to the same Revelation.

3. Interpret Scripture Within the Living Tradition of the Church

The Bible did not emerge in a religious or cultural vacuum.

It was received, proclaimed, meditated upon, and transmitted within the apostolic community.

Therefore, its interpretation must remain in harmony with the faith transmitted by the Apostles and preserved by the Church throughout the centuries.

This is where the writings of the Church Fathers, the testimonies of the early Christians, conciliar definitions, and the constant teachings of the Magisterium acquire particular importance.

This does not mean that every individual opinion expressed by a Church Father is infallible, but their testimony, especially when there is agreement on doctrinal matters, constitutes an enormously valuable reference.

Tradition is not an obstacle to understanding the Bible. It is the living context in which the Church has received and preserves the Word of God.

4. Maintain the Analogy of Faith

This principle means that the truths of faith are interconnected and form a coherent whole.

We cannot interpret a biblical doctrine in such a way that it ultimately destroys another revealed truth.

For example, we cannot explain grace in a way that eliminates human responsibility, nor defend human freedom in such a way that we deny the necessity of divine grace.

The Catholic faith is not made up of isolated truths that can be individually accepted or rejected according to personal preferences.

It is an organic unity.

A genuinely Catholic interpretation must respect the harmony of the entire Revelation.

9. Can the Magisterium Make Mistakes When Interpreting the

Bible?

This question deserves a particularly careful answer.

The Catholic Church does not teach that every statement made by a bishop, every homily given by a priest, or every biblical commentary written by a Pope is automatically infallible.

The Magisterium possesses different degrees of authority, and the faithful must understand the distinctions between its teachings.

The First Vatican Council, in the dogmatic constitution *Pastor aeternus*, defined the specific conditions under which the Roman Pontiff enjoys infallibility when speaking *ex cathedra* on matters of faith and morals.

For its part, the Second Vatican Council, in *Lumen gentium*, paragraphs 25 and 27, develops the doctrine concerning the Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff and the bishops.

This means that not all ecclesiastical statements possess the same degree of authority, nor do they require an identical response from the faithful.

There are teachings proposed as divinely revealed, definitive definitions, and non-definitive authentic teachings, which require the corresponding religious assent.

The Catechism, in paragraphs 888–892, explains this matter.

Now, there is a fundamental distinction we must never lose sight of:

The authority of the Magisterium does not mean that every personal opinion expressed by an ecclesiastical authority automatically becomes revealed truth.

Doctrinal authority must be understood according to the nature of the teaching act, its subject matter, and the degree of magisterial commitment involved.

The Church cannot legitimately teach a doctrine contrary to the deposit of faith she has received.

This does not mean, either, that every member of the faithful can become the supreme judge of the Church’s teachings, accepting only those that coincide with their personal opinions.

The Catholic attitude requires formation, humility, fidelity, and a proper understanding of the

different degrees of doctrinal authority.

Christian obedience is not a renunciation of intelligence, but neither can it become an excuse for replacing the authority of the Church with private judgment.

10. The Problem of Our Time: One Bible and Thousands of Interpretations

This question has particular relevance in our time.

The Internet has enormously multiplied the possibilities of accessing the Bible and theological studies.

Never before has it been so easy to consult biblical commentaries, historical documents, homilies of the Church Fathers, or explanations by the great Doctors of the Church.

But this abundance also brings dangers.

Today we find preachers who present personal interpretations as indisputable truths, channels that construct doctrines from isolated verses, and communities that select particular texts to justify positions they had already decided upon.

The problem is not that different explanations of a biblical passage exist. Theological research can legitimately offer different hypotheses concerning historical, literary, or exegetical questions.

The problem arises when a particular interpretation becomes an authority parallel to the Church and seeks to establish a doctrine contrary to the Catholic faith.

Let us consider some fundamental questions:

- The Eucharist: Is it truly the Body and Blood of Christ, or merely a symbol?
- Baptism: Is it a sacrament that communicates grace, or merely a public testimony of faith?
- The authority of Peter: Does the particular mission entrusted to him by Christ have a biblical foundation?
- Apostolic succession: Is it a reality willed by Christ, or a later human institution?
- Marriage: Can its sacramental meaning be separated from the moral teaching transmitted by the Church?

All these questions have been the subject of different interpretations among Christian communities.

The Catholic response does not consist in searching for the verse that best suits our preferences, but in studying Scripture in its entirety, consulting apostolic Tradition, and heeding the teaching of the Magisterium.

Otherwise, we run the risk of constructing a religion according to our own preferences.

A religion in which each person selects the passages they like, discards those that make them uncomfortable, and ultimately becomes their own magisterium.

But Christ did not found a Church so that each generation could reinvent Christianity.

He founded it so that His Gospel would remain alive and be faithfully transmitted until the end of time.

11. What Should a Catholic Do When Encountering a Biblical Interpretation Contrary to the Church’s Doctrine?

The first attitude should be prudence.

We must not automatically accept every interpretation simply because the person presenting it uses religious language or quotes numerous verses.

Nor should we reject an explanation merely because it seems unfamiliar or because we have not heard it before.

A well-formed Catholic must learn to discern.

We can follow several practical criteria:

First: Consult the biblical context.

We should never interpret a verse in isolation from the paragraphs that precede and follow it. We need to understand who is speaking, to whom the message is addressed, and what issue is being discussed.

Second: Turn to the sources of the Church.

The Catechism, conciliar documents, and teachings of the Magisterium are essential references for understanding Catholic doctrine.

Third: Study the Church Fathers.

Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint John Chrysostom, and Saint Irenaeus, among others, allow us to discover how the generations of Christians closest to the Apostles understood and transmitted the faith.

Fourth: Distinguish between a theological opinion and a doctrine of faith.

Not everything written by a theologian possesses the same authority as a dogmatic definition. Nor does every difference in interpretation constitute a doctrinal contradiction.

Fifth: Avoid intellectual pride.

Reading the Bible should lead us to Christ, not to considering ourselves superior to others because we possess a particular interpretation.

True Christian wisdom requires humility.

We can study, ask questions, investigate, and deepen our understanding, but always with the willingness to allow ourselves to be taught by the Church.

12. The Church Does Not Restrict the Bible: She Protects Its True Meaning

There is a recurring accusation against the Catholic Church: that she has sought to monopolize the interpretation of the Bible in order to prevent the faithful from discovering its contents for themselves.

This assertion confuses two completely different realities: safeguarding the truth and appropriating it.

The Church is not the owner of the Word of God. Nor does she have the right to modify it to adapt it to the preferences of each age.

Her mission is precisely the opposite: to preserve it in its entirety.

That is why interpretative authority should not be understood as a human privilege, but as an extraordinary spiritual responsibility.

When the Church defines a truth of faith, she is not simply expressing the majority opinion of her members. She is exercising a mission received from Christ.

And when she defends a traditional interpretation against a doctrinal novelty incompatible with Revelation, she is not necessarily resisting knowledge or theological progress. She may be fulfilling precisely her duty to safeguard the deposit of faith.

This does not mean that every ancient explanation is automatically correct, nor that the Church must reject legitimate advances in biblical studies.

It means that no theological development can become a rupture with the apostolic faith.

Authentic Christian renewal does not consist in abandoning what has been received, but in understanding it ever more deeply and transmitting it faithfully.

Conclusion: We Are Not the Owners of the Word of God

Sacred Scripture is one of the greatest treasures God has given to humanity.

Within its pages we find the history of salvation, divine promises, the covenant with Israel, the preaching of the prophets, the Incarnation of the Word, the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the hope of eternal life.

But the Bible must not become an instrument placed at the service of our personal opinions.

We cannot use it to justify what we have already decided to believe, nor select its teachings as though they were independent fragments of a Revelation that we are entitled to reconstruct according to our own preferences.

Christ did not leave His disciples a community without authority or a multitude of independent interpreters. He founded His Church, entrusted the Apostles with the mission of teaching, and promised to remain with them:

“Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

He also promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit:

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13).

The Catholic Church recognizes in these promises the foundation of her mission to preserve and faithfully transmit Revelation.

Therefore, when we affirm that the Church possesses the authority to interpret the Bible authentically, we are not saying that Catholics should not think, study, or deepen their understanding of Scripture.

We are affirming something far more important: **that revealed truth does not depend on the individual judgment of each generation, because God has entrusted His Word to a Church that must safeguard it until the end of time.**

We can read the Bible in our homes, study it as a family, meditate upon it during prayer, and spend our entire lives deepening our understanding of its teachings.

But we must do so with the humility of those who know that they have not received the faith in order to reinvent it, but to preserve and transmit it.

Because the Bible does not need every person to construct their own truth.

It needs men and women to discover, receive, and live the Truth that God has revealed.

And that Truth has a name: **Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God, who founded His Church and promised to remain with her until the end of the world.**

“The Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Fundamental Doctrinal Sources for Further Study

- Second Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, especially paragraphs 7–10, 12, and 21–25.
- Second Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, especially paragraphs 20, 25, and 27.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church: paragraphs 74–100, 101–141, and 888–892.
- Council of Trent: Fourth Session, Decrees on Sacred Scripture and Its Interpretation

(April 8, 1546).

- Saint Irenaeus of Lyons: *Against Heresies*, especially Book III.
- Saint Vincent of Lérins: *Commonitorium*, especially chapter 2.
- First Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor aeternus*.