



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION
SCRIPTURARUM THESAURUS
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
JOHN PAUL II

BY WHICH THE NEW VULGATE EDITION
OF THE HOLY BIBLE IS DECLARED
"TYPICAL" AND IS PROMULGATED
JOHN PAUL, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
FOR PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE

THE TREASURE OF THE SCRIPTURES, in which is contained the message of salvation given by God to the human race—for Saint Augustine rightly says: "from that country, whence we are sojourning, letters have come to us: they themselves are the ones... which exhort to live well" (*Enarr. in Ps. 90*, s. 2, 1; PL 37, 1159)—has always been deservedly held by the Church in the highest honour and has been guarded with special care. Indeed from her very beginnings she never ceased to make sure that the Christian people might enjoy the fullest possible opportunity of receiving the word of God, especially in the sacred Liturgy, in the celebration of which "the importance of Sacred Scripture is very great" (Conc. Vat. II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 24).

Therefore in the regions of the West the Church has preferred to the others that edition which is usually called the Vulgate and which, composed for the most part by the excellent teacher Saint Jerome, has been "confirmed in the Church herself by the usage of so many centuries" (Conc. Trid., sess. IV; *Enchir. Bibl.*, n. 21). As a proof of such a great esteem there is also her concern for preparing a text according to critical methodology, and precisely by means of the edition which is still being arranged along scientific guidelines by the monks of the Abbey of Saint Jerome in Rome founded for that purpose by our predecessor of happy memory Pius XI (Const. Apost. *Inter Praecipuas*, 15 June 1933; A.A.S. XXVI, 1943, pp. 85 ff.).

However in our own time the Second Vatican Council, while confirming the respect given to that

edition which people call the Vulgate (Const. *Dei Verbum*, n. 22) and while striving zealously so that the understanding of the Psalter in the Liturgy of the Hours might be made easier, decreed that the successfully initiated work of revising it "should be terminated as soon as possible. It shall take into account the style of Christian Latinity as well as the entire tradition of the Latin Church" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 91).

Our predecessor of recent memory, Paul VI, was moved by all these considerations to set up even before the end of the same Council, that is on 29 November 1965, a special Pontifical Commission whose task it would be to carry out the command of the same General Council and to revise all the books of Sacred Scripture so that the Church might be enriched with a Latin edition which advancing biblical studies demanded and which might serve especially in the Liturgy.

In realizing this revision, "the old text of the Vulgate edition was taken into consideration word for word, namely, whenever the original texts are accurately rendered, such as they are found in modern critical editions; however the text was prudently improved, whenever it departs from them or interprets them less correctly. For this reason Christian biblical Latinity was used so that a just evaluation of tradition might be properly combined with the legitimate demands of critical science prevailing in these times" (cf. Address of Paul VI, 23 December 1966; *A.A.S.* LIX, 1967, pp. 53 ff.)

The text born out of this revision—which, indeed, was quite demanding in certain books of the Old Testament which Saint Jerome did not touch—was published in separate volumes from 1969 to 1977; but now it is being offered in a "typical" edition contained in one volume. This New Vulgate edition will also be of such a nature that vernacular translations, which are destined for liturgical and pastoral use, may be referred to it; and, to use the words of our predecessor Paul VI, "it is permissible to think that it is a certain sort of foundation on which biblical studies... may rest, especially where libraries open to special studies can be consulted only with greater difficulty, and where the diffusion of suitable research materials is more hindered" (cf. Address, December 22, 1977; cf. daily *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 December 1977, p. 1).

In past times the Church considered that the old Vulgate edition was sufficient and was abundantly effective for sharing the word of God with the Christian people: something indeed which this New Vulgate edition will be able to accomplish all the more fully.

Consequently we are now happy to entrust to the Church the printed work which Paul VI greatly desired but was unable to see completely finished, which was followed up with enthusiastic support by John Paul I who had decided to send the books of the Pentateuch, revised by the aforementioned Pontifical Commission, as a gift to the Bishops about to meet in the city of Puebla, and which work we ourself together with many people from the Catholic world have ardently awaited.

These things being so, by virtue of this Letter we declare the New Vulgate edition of the Holy Bible

as "typical" and we promulgate it to be used especially in the sacred Liturgy but also as suitable for other things, as we have said.

Finally we decree that this Constitution of ours be firm and forever efficacious and be scrupulously observed by all concerned, notwithstanding any obstacles whatsoever.

Given in Rome at St Peter's, 25 April, on the feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, in the year 1979, the first of our Pontificate.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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