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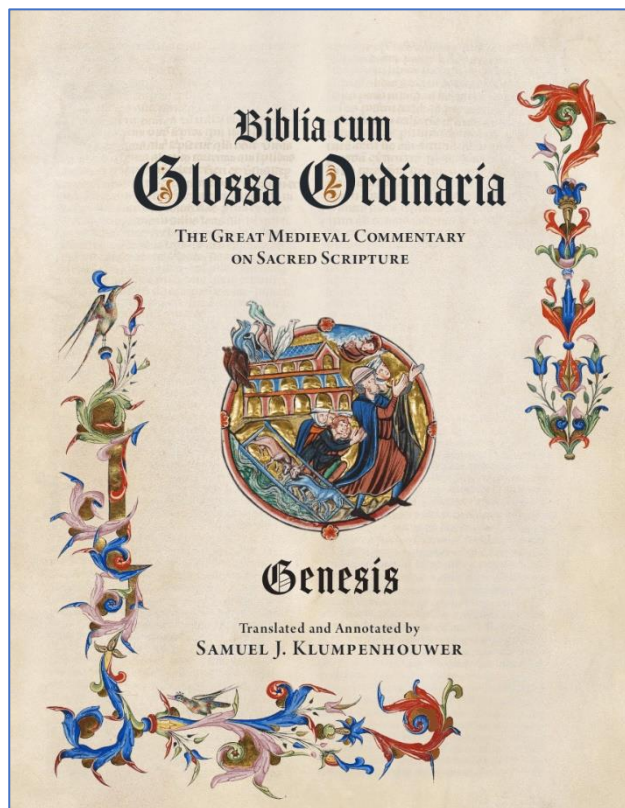
The Spirituality Committee of the
Catholic Bar Association presents
a Book Review of

**BIBLIA CUM GLOSSA ORDINARIA:
THE GREAT MEDIEVAL COMMENTARY ON
SACRED SCRIPTURE**

Translated and annotated by
Samuel J. Klumpenhouwer

Reviewed by Ellen Dorn, a member
of the CBA's Spirituality Committee

When St. Thomas Aquinas studied scripture, exactly *what* was he reading? Not the New American Study Bible, I presume.



In the 13th century, the most common commentary on sacred scripture was the *Glossa Ordinaria*, a manuscript that consists of the Vulgate text accompanied by individual “glosses,” or excerpts from the biblical commentaries of Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and other patristic and medieval authors. One cannot read far in Aquinas’ *Summa* before encountering a quotation introduced by, “The Gloss says...”

The distinctive page layout of the *Glossa* was developed in the twelfth century and remained in common use until the seventeenth century. Each page of the manuscript contains the Biblical text in the center (in a large and spacious font), interspersed with small and short (2-4 word) glosses; this center block is surrounded in the margins by longer commentary from the church fathers. Emmaus Academic (a Division of The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology) has introduced a beautiful English translation of the book of Genesis, *cum Glossa Ordinaria*, that preserves the unique and very functional page layout of the original manuscripts. Translated and annotated by Samuel J. Klumpenhouwer, let’s hope this publication is the first of many more to come.

The *Glossa Ordinaria* enables the reader to easily move between the Biblical text and commentary by the masters. You can read different and sometimes conflicting interpretations by the fathers (see, e.g., the commentaries by Bede and Augustine on the order of creation in Gen. 2:8). There are commentaries grappling with inconsistencies in the Biblical text itself (in Gen. 46-47, Jerome and Augustine both work to reconcile the inconsistent count of people who entered Egypt with Jacob). Some comment on the literal sense of a passage while others ponder its spiritual sense. For example, on Genesis 6:16, Alcuin notes that the narrow taper at the top of the ark scatters the weight of the rains, while Gregory comments, “Narrow is the gate that leadeth to life.”

This new volume is a delightfully old way to study the book of Genesis. I recommend it for your reflection and study. It is also a delightful gift for the Biblical student on your Christmas list.

The volume can be purchased directly from Emmaus Academic, <https://stpaulcenter.com/emmaus-academic/about/>, or from other online retailers and Catholic bookstores near you.