**How do we read Scripture?**

Taken from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05692b.htm

In general, the sense of Sacred Scripture is the [truth](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) actually conveyed by it. We must well distinguish between the sense and the signification of a word. A good dictionary will give us, in the case of most words, a list of their various possible meanings or significations; but no reader will be tempted to believe that a word has all these meanings wherever it occurs.

**Example**: point: The pencil has a sharp point.

It is not polite to point at people.

net: What was your net gain for the year?

Crabbing is easier if you bring a net along.

The context or some other restrictive element will determine the meaning in which each word is used in any given passage, and this meaning is the sense of the word. The signification of the word is its possible meaning; the sense of a word is its actual meaning in any given context. A sentence, like a word, may have several possible significations, but it has only one sense or meaning intended by the author. Here, again, the signification denotes the possible meaning of the sentence, while the **sense is the meaning which the sentence here and now conveys**. In the case of the [Bible](http://www.newadvent.org/bible), it must be kept in mind that [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) is its author, and that [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), the Sovereign Lord of all things, can manifest [truth](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) not merely by the use of words, but also by disposing outward things in such a way that one is the figure of the other. In the former case we have the literal sense; in the latter, the spiritual (cf. [St. Thomas](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14663b.htm), Quodl., vii, Q. vi, a. 14).