Foreword

After Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope in 2005, taking the name Benedict XVI, I began reading his writings to understand who this man was and what he was about. I found a writer who offers coherent, comprehensive answers that get to the heart of the challenging questions facing not just theology, but also contemporary society. I hope that this book offers the opportunity for others to explore Ratzinger’s theological thinking so that his ideas and approach may contribute to new and fresh ways of responding to the problems facing modern theology and society.

I am delighted to be afforded the opportunity to publish this book and share my research both with the academic community as well as those in the wider community who have an interest in theological debate since Vatican II. The book is based on my PhD dissertation, which I defended in 2012. Material has been added to expand on a number of important themes covered in the original document and other material, more in keeping with a dissertation, has been removed. However, the substantive arguments are anchored in and remain in continuity with those of my dissertation.

The research for this book began when Siobhan Clarke, of the Patricians group in Beechwood parish church, Ranelagh, Dublin, suggested that I give the next monthly talk to that group in March
2007 on a topic of my choosing. I chose to present on some interesting ideas that I had come across in the newly elected pope’s earlier writings. The title of the paper, “The Women of the Bible,” served as the beginning of this research and book. I thank Siobhan and the Patricians group for affording me the opportunity to present the paper, and, as a result, commence a very fulfilling period of my life.

I want to acknowledge a number of people who provided important support and guidance to me, without whom this research would not have been completed, let alone started. First, I thank Dr. Tom Dalzell, my thesis supervisor, for providing critical input to this research project and for guiding me through the difficult doctoral journey. I also thank Dr. Bernadette Flanagan, former director of research at All Hallows College, Dublin City University, for her support, particularly as I began this research project.

As I began the research for this book, Dr. James Corkery, who also has a research interest in Joseph Ratzinger’s writings, generously spent time discussing “all things Ratzinger” with me, which I found very helpful. I also acknowledge the contributions Dr. Brendan Leahy, former professor of systematic theology at the Pontifical University Maynooth and now bishop of Limerick, and Dr. Tony Draper of All Hallows College made to the finalization of my thesis.

I also acknowledge, and thank most sincerely, the very significant help and support provided to me by Dr. Teresa Whittington, head librarian of the Central Catholic Library in Dublin. Dr. Whittington on numerous occasions responded very thoroughly to my inquiries about the availability of texts from the library, and at times suggested additional texts that were highly valuable to the development of my research. I thank as well Trinity College Dublin’s School of Religions and Theology and the Loyola Institute for providing me with valuable access to the library as I completed this book.
Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge Michael Gibson and Lisa Gruenisen of Fortress Press for their generous support, guidance, and wisdom as I translated, and further developed, my doctoral thesis into this book.