

## THE LECTIONARY

In the Sunday Lectionary, there are four readings for each Sunday: an Old Testament Reading, a Psalm, an Epistle, and a Gospel Reading. There is a three-year sequence of readings with three sets of readings, one set per year. The Liturgical Year begins with the first Sunday of Advent. The weekday Lectionary is different. It contains three readings: either a first Old Testament Reading, or an Epistle reading; a Psalm, and a reading from a Gospel. Its cycle also begins at the start of Advent.

This lectionary was promulgated in May of 1969 in Latin, and the vernacular texts were issued shortly after that. A revised English edition was issued in 1999.

### SUNDAY LECTIONARY:

**The first reading:** The first reading for the Sunday Mass for most of the church year is taken from the Old Testament. There is a direct relation between the two readings, as when Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah in the Gospel story and the first reading is the same text from Isaiah. On other Sundays, a word or concept in the first reading relates to the theme or text of the Gospel. During the 50-day Easter season, there is no Old Testament reading. The first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles.

**The Psalm:** This is called the Responsorial. It is a song adapted from the psalms of the Old Testament. It is sung by a Cantor with a sung response from the Assembly. It relates in some way to the first reading and has been selected to reiterate its theme. If a cantor is not present, it becomes the responsibility of a reader to lead the prayer by reading the text with pauses for a spoken response from the assembly.

**The Second Reading, the Epistle:** This reading is usually selected from the Epistles. The New Testament reading selected is read in a semi-continuous fashion over a period of weeks. Over a period of three years, most of the letters of St. Paul are read. There is no attempt to relate the content of the Epistle to the content of the Gospel. The exception to this is Lent and holy days. On certain Sundays during Lent, there is a correspondence in the theme of all four readings.

**The Gospel:** Each year's set of readings is broadly based on one of the Synoptic Gospels. The years are designated Cycle A, Cycle B, and Cycle C. Cycle A uses the Gospel according to Matthew, whose gospel is always placed first in the Catholic New Testament. Cycle B is Mark, whose Gospel is placed second in the New Testament. Cycle C is Luke, which is the Third Gospel. These Gospels are read continuously from Sunday to Sunday during "Ordinary Time." During the seasons of Lent, Advent, Christmas, and Easter, the Gospel of the cycle is read, but not continuously, since during the festal times and during Lent the Gospel of John is frequently read.

During the Easter season, the Gospel of John is read throughout the season. For example, for this year, Cycle A, Matthew is the selected gospel, but during the Sundays of the Easter Season, the Gospel of John is read on some Sundays alternating with readings from the Gospel of Luke on others. The reading of the Gospel according to Matthew resumes with the restoration of Ordinary Time.

## **WEEKDAY LECTIONARY**

The Weekday Lectionary is organized in a different manner than the Sunday Lectionary. It is a two-year cycle. Each year, all three synoptic Gospels are read. The two-year cycle refers to the first readings and the responsorial psalm. The first readings of the two-year cycle are taken from both the New Testament (Epistles) and from the Old Testament. Like the second reading of the Sunday Lectionary, the texts chosen are read (to some extent), in their entirety, over several days and weeks. They are not selected with reference to the Gospel reading.