

An Introduction to the *Lectonary for Mass*

Titles of Different but Related Books:

- **Bible** - all the sacred scriptures of Christianity, arranged in "canonical" order (OT & NT, from Genesis to Revelation)
- **Lectonary** - all the readings used at the Eucharist and other liturgies, arranged in order of the liturgical calendar
- **Missal** - all the texts needed for Mass, including instructions, prayers, readings, some music, etc.
 - Since Vatican II, the *Roman Missal* is usually published in two parts: the *Sacramentary* (texts and prayers spoken by the priest at the altar or presider's chair, but not including the readings) and the *Lectonary for Mass* (all readings proclaimed from the lectern or ambo).
- **Other Catholic Ritual Books:**
 - **Book of the Gospels** - more elaborate publications of the Gospel readings from the Lectonary, esp. for use in liturgical processions
 - **Gradual** - music and lyrics for sung texts of the Mass, as well as tones for singing other liturgical texts
 - **Pontifical** - texts for ceremonies normally performed only by bishops and popes, such as ordinations and confirmations
 - **Ordos** - various publications containing the "Order of Service" (instructions, prayers, biblical readings) for specific rites and sacraments, such as Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, Anointing of the Sick, Reconciliation/Penance, etc.
- **Common Lectionary / Revised Common Lectionary** - used by most mainline Protestant denominations today; very similar to the Roman Catholic *Lectonary for Mass*.

Liturgical Calendar / Liturgical Seasons:

- **Advent** - a season of watchful/joyful/hopeful preparation, up to 4 weeks long; begins *four Sundays* before Christmas (Nov. 27 to Dec. 3)
 - **Dec. 17-24** - the last week before Christmas has readings from Matthew 1 and Luke 1 and special "O Antiphons"
- **CHRISTMAS** - not just *Christmas Day* itself (Dec. 25), but a continued celebration for two to three weeks *afterward*
 - **Christmas Season** - from the *Christmas Vigil* (Dec. 24 eve), to *Epiphany* (Jan. 6), to the *Baptism of the Lord* (mid-Jan.)
- **Ordinary Time (I)** - the period (varies between 4 and 9 weeks) from the end of the Christmas season to the beginning of Lent
 - called the "*Season of Epiphany*" by Anglicans and in some Protestant Churches
- **Lent** - a season of penitential preparation ("forty days"), from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday morning
 - **Holy Week** - the week before Easter, beginning Palm Sunday (a.k.a. Passion Sunday) and including the Easter Triduum
- **EASTER** - not just Easter Sunday itself (rule for movable date: *first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox*)

- **Easter Triduum**- "three holy days" from Holy Thursday evening, to Good Friday, to the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday evening
- **Easter Octave** - from Easter Sunday to the following Sunday (now called "Divine Mercy Sunday" by Roman Catholics)
- **Easter Season** - a total of 50 days (7 full weeks) from Easter Sunday up to and including Pentecost Sunday
- **Ordinary Time (II)** - the rest of the year (up to 34 weeks total), after Pentecost Sunday and ending with the next Advent
 - called the "*Season of Pentecost*" by Anglicans and in some Protestant Churches

Liturgical Colors:

- **Advent** - *Purple*, except for *Rose* (optional) on the Third Sunday of Advent ("Gaudete Sunday")
- **Christmas** - *White or Gold* (not red and green!)
- **Lent** - *Purple*, except *Rose* (optional) on the 4th Sunday of Lent ("Laetare Sunday"), and *Red* on Passion/Palm Sunday
- **Easter Triduum** - *White or Gold* on Holy Thursday and at the Easter Vigil; *Red* on Good Friday
- **Easter Season** - *White or Gold*, except for *Red* on Pentecost Sunday
- **Ordinary Time** - *Green*, except for special colors on particular feasts or occasions, as follows:
 - *White* - Solemnities of the Lord and the Saints; major local feasts; funeral liturgies (*Black* also allowed)
 - *Red* - feasts of the Apostles, Martyrs, or the Holy Spirit

Masses for Sundays and Major Feast Days: **Three Readings** - *really five!*

1. **First Reading** - from the *Old Testament*; except from Acts of the Apostles during Easter Season
2. **Responsorial Psalm** - mostly from the Book of Psalms; sometimes other biblical "Canticles"
3. **Second Reading** - mostly from the Letters of Paul, but sometimes other *NT Epistles* and the Book of Revelation
4. **Verse before the Gospel** - usually a direct biblical quotation, but sometimes adapted from a biblical text
5. **Gospel** - Year *A: Matthew*; Year *B: Mark* mostly; Year *C: Luke*; (where's *John*? used mostly in Lent & Easter)

Masses for Weekdays, Lesser Feasts, and Special Occasions: **Two Readings** - *really four!*

1. **First Reading** - semi-continuous readings; alternate between OT & NT; on a two-year cycle
2. **Responsorial Psalm** - mostly from the Book of Psalms, but sometimes other Canticles; also on a two-year cycle
3. **Verse before the Gospel** - first edition had mostly "common" texts; now specifically prescribed texts
4. **Gospel** - same each year; semi-continuous readings from Mark, Matthew, Luke, in that order

Concluding Notes:

- There is normally an intentional thematic connection between the *Gospel* & the *First Reading* (usually also the Resp. Psalm & Gospel Accl.); but the *Second Reading* is usually unrelated, since it follows a separate semi-continuous reading pattern.
- If one includes all the Masses for weekdays, rituals, votives, the propers and commons of saints, and special needs and occasions, the *Lectionary for Mass* now covers *much* of the NT (about 90% of the Gospels, 55% of the rest: Acts, Epistles, Revelation), but still very little of the OT (slightly over 13%), but this is understandable, given how much longer the OT is.