READING GOD'S WORD: THE LECTIONARY
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The word of God has such an important place in the liturgy of the Church that we can tend to take it for granted, or see it only in terms of the daily set of readings. We often fail to realize that scripture — God’s word to his beloved children — is the basis and foundation of the prayers we say, and the source of meaning for our acts and gestures. The Lectionary for Mass, while only a part of the scriptural influence on liturgy, gives us a solid entry into the place of God’s word in our liturgical worship:

- Scripture and liturgy: We use the word of God as a basis of our liturgy, both as a way of learning God’s message to us, and as a means of expressing our faith-filled response to his love. When we understand the full role of scripture in the liturgy, we can grow in our liturgical worship and praise.

- The lectionary we use at Mass: The present lectionary is the Church’s way of teaching and forming the people of God from his own word. The Sunday cycles contain the basic truths to be believed and lived by his people; the weekday, sanctoral and other cycles help Christians to grow in their knowledge and love of their heavenly Father, whose Spirit leads them in the footsteps of the Son of Man.

- The best use of the Mass lectionary: This issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy contains practical and pastoral ideas for deepening the life and worship of your believing community through the lectionary.
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THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD

We have often heard this phrase, and have responded to it by offering our thanks to God. But do we ever stop to realize what these words mean?

In this reading, these short sentences we have just heard, God has been speaking to us. Once more his saving word has been proclaimed to his people, once again his Spirit has evoked our response in faith.

When scripture is proclaimed in church, it is God himself who is speaking to his beloved children. He teaches us, forms our faith, deepens our love. He points out the way ahead, he lets us share in his thoughts, which are above and beyond man's own thinking.

Each time God calls us together to celebrate his glory in liturgy, he invites us to listen to his word: he invites us not to harden our hearts, but to listen to his voice today. In a spirit of faith, of willingness to hear and obey, we come to his assembly, so that he may teach us. We come to listen and to learn, to be shown his way.

Our thanks to God for this great gift are expressed simply by our words. Yet our gratitude cannot end here: it goes on to be expressed through Christ and his Church in the great eucharistic prayer. Our thanks continue in our daily living of the word, our daily effort to serve God by following and loving his Son, through whom he speaks to us. For it is Jesus alone of whom we can truly say, This is the Word of the Lord, and it is only through Christ that we can offer our complete thanks to God.

RIGHT TO GOD'S WORD

The Christian people have “the sacred and inalienable right of receiving the word of God, the whole word of God, into which the Church does not cease to penetrate ever more profoundly.”

Pope Paul

(AAS 68 (1971) page 100)
SCRIPTURE AND LITURGY

SCRIPTURE IN THE LITURGY

Scripture, the word of God, the bible — this has a unique place in the liturgy. Readings are proclaimed from the bible and are given a living explanation in the homily. The psalms which are sung are also taken directly from God's word. Indirectly, the scriptures inspire the prayers, orations and liturgical chants, and give meaning to various actions and signs used by the people of God in their worship. When composers are preparing texts for religious singing and hymnody, they should draw them mainly from scripture and from sources in the liturgy. In the present renewal, the Church is promoting a warm and living love for God's word, as has always been its tradition, in order to restore and adapt liturgy in today's world. (See Liturgy constitution, nos. 24 and 121.)

Scripture in the Church

The first and most evident source of scripture in the eucharistic celebration is the official book of readings, Lectionary for Mass. Lectionary and sacramentary together form the missal. The lectionary provides the texts for the first reading, the responsorial psalm and its refrain, the second reading, the gospel acclamation, and for the gospel reading. A selection of common psalms and gospel acclamations is also contained in this book.

The hymnal, Catholic Book of Worship, provides musical settings for the gospel acclamations (nos. 201-208) and for the common responsorial psalm and refrains (nos. 172-200). A few other psalms are given too.

In the sacramentary, the entrance and communion antiphons are usually taken directly from scripture, or are based on it. Other prayers and texts of the day's proper and of the order of Mass reflect or are based on scriptural sources, echoing the word of God in the prayers we use. While some examples (Lord, I am not worthy; Lamb of God) are easy to recognize, many other scriptural phrases have been woven into collects, eucharistic prayers and other parts of the Mass. The liturgy committee or team may follow a similar practice when working with the celebrant in preparing introductions, penitential rites, prayer of the faithful, and other similar adaptations; this is also true of blessings: see Bulletin 49. When a Mass reading uses a passage or phrase that is repeated or reflected in one of the eucharistic prayers, Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy makes a note of this as a further aid to the celebrant and his team.

Liturgy of the Hours

From the beginning, the Church has carried on the prayer of Christ the high priest. As the centuries passed by, the divine office or liturgy of the hours developed into a more formal mode of prayer, but continued to be shared by people and clergy. Its basis is scriptural: it is thus that the people of God sing his praises by psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles.

1 This article is intended as a brief introduction and survey. For a fuller and more penetrating study, see Pierre Jounel, The Bible in the Liturgy, in The Liturgy and the Word of God, Collegeville, 1959, pages 1-20.
In the prayer of the Church, the psalms, canticles (chosen from both testaments) and scripture readings are taken directly from the Bible. Responsories, antiphons, and versicles and responses are either from scripture or closely based on it. The Lord's prayer, from Matthew's gospel, is used at the conclusion of morning and evening prayer (see Bulletin 44, pages 154-159, for a meditation on the Lord's prayer).

The rest of the liturgy of the hours is greatly influenced by the word of God. Many of the writings of the Church Fathers and other saints are commentaries on scripture, or explain and reflect its teaching. In the earlier centuries of the Church, biblical concepts permeated the lives of Christians much more than we are accustomed to in our generation.

Restoring the liturgy of the hours to the life of the Church in our time is one of the tasks placed before us by the Second Vatican Council (Liturgy constitution, nos. 99-100). It is to be the prayer of the whole Church, not reserved for clergy and religious only. The reforms made in the past few years have given it a format that is more easily celebrated in public, with singing and full community participation.

As in all parts of the renewed liturgy, priests and people need a better understanding of scripture to be able to celebrate the liturgy of the hours as well as possible.

Some helps are now becoming available to pastors, who are responsible for restoring the prayer of the hours to the people of God (see Liturgy constitution, no. 100). Particular mention may be made of three books prepared by William G. Storey, head of the School of Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Parishes are beginning to use the Canadian hymnal in introducing some elements of the liturgy of the hours into the prayer life of their people. Others are having evening prayer on Saturday, a solemn celebration of evening prayer once a week in a convent or rectory. The renewal is just beginning!

Liturgy of the Sacraments

The Lectionary for Mass contains scripture readings for the major ritual Masses, to be used when sacraments are being celebrated during Mass (see nos. 743-799 in the lectionary). As well as these texts, the new ritual for each sacrament contains its own lectionary, giving a wide selection of appropriate readings, psalms and acclamations for these sacramental celebrations.

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2 Fuller details on the place of the word in the prayer of the Church may be found in the General Instruction which is printed at the beginning of the new editions of the liturgy of the hours. See especially nos. 140-146 and 100-109.


These books may be obtained from Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556, U.S.A.
These sacramental lectionaries now include the following:

**Baptism**
- Rite of Christian initiation of adults (1972), which provides readings for each stage; see also lectionary, nos. 743-756, 762.

**Confirmation**

**Holy Orders**
- The ordination of deacons, priests and bishops (1968): see Bulletin 26, appendix, nos. 1-43, pages 230-232; see also lectionary, nos. 769-773.
- Rite of institution of readers and acolytes, admission to candidacy for the diaconate and presbyterate, and commitment to celibacy (1972).

**Marriage**
- Rite for celebrating marriage (1969): see Bulletin 30, nos. 67-105, pages 184-186; see also lectionary, nos. 774-778.

**Penance**

**Anointing of the sick**
- Pastoral care of the sick and rite of anointing (1972): see nos. 53, 72, 107, 143-144, 151-229.

**Funerals**
- Catholic funeral rite (1973): nos. 23-26, 40-43, 84-87, 100-103.

**Other rites:** Blessing of abbots and abbesses: lectionary, nos. 779-783; Religious profession and consecration of virgins (1970): lectionary, nos. 784-788.

**Blessings**

The reform of liturgical blessings is still under study by the Congregation for Divine Worship. Christians are encouraged to use blessings more often, especially in their daily work.

Some indications of the direction which the new ritual blessings will take can be found in the sacramental rituals, which include blessings. As with the other parts of the liturgy, a greater emphasis on scripture (readings, psalms, phrases and references) will be evident.

Bulletin 49, *Blessed be God and his creation*, presents a fresh perspective on blessings in today's Church, and includes this scriptural basis.
Used in Bible Services

A bible service is a community celebration in which we listen to the word of God, reflect upon it, and respond to it in prayer, song and action. This is done in a spirit of faith.

Scripture services or bible celebrations were encouraged by the Vatican Council's Constitution on the liturgy (no. 35:4). It was suggested that most appropriate times for these are the vigils of more important feasts, a number of weekdays during Advent and Lent, Sundays and feast days. Bible services are also recommended in communities without a priest. Parish liturgy committees should take another look at this list, and consider how they might arrange for a few more of these celebrations this year.

Penance celebrations are a form of bible service, perhaps the one most familiar to priests and people today. Each Lent and Advent, in the first and last issues of the year, the National Bulletin prints a penance celebration, with suggested theme, readings, hymns, prayers and examination of conscience. These are intended to be an aid to the local liturgy committee, and provide a good starting point for developing their own celebration. These penance celebrations have been printed in Bulletins 32 and 36 (1972); 37 and 41 (1973); 42 and 46 (1974); no. 47 provided one for Lent, 1975, and the Advent text will be in Bulletin 51.

Other bible services and helps for designing them have appeared in various issues of the Bulletin:

Greetings 33:94
Peace and justice service 33:94-96
Preparing a bible service 34:140-143
Convent bible service 34:163
Advent bible service 36:248
Advent and Christmas services 36:262-264
Holy family service 36:266
Year-end service 36:267-268
Celebrating the Easter season 38:99-100
More participation 38:100-102
Creative creed 38:102-103
Music in bible services 39:173
Shepherd me 39:174
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Wakes 40:207-211
Greetings 40:231
Festival of lessons and carols 41:297-298
Greetings 43:111-112
Bible and prayer 45:230
Bible services 45:231
Penitential psalms 48:103-107
Three days for prayer 48:125-133

Bulletin 49: The whole issue describes the celebration of prayers and blessings, usually in the form of a bible service.
Bible services can be celebrated at any time or place, and may range from simple to highly developed in form.

Every community — parish, class room, convent, rectory, home, organization — could benefit from celebrating one or two services a year, perhaps in preparation of a special feast, or as a quiet conclusion at the end of a Sunday.

Scripture — well proclaimed and carefully heard — is an essential part of our community celebrations, in Mass, sacraments, liturgy of the hours, blessings, and bible services. In order to prepare to hear God's word clearly, we have to be attuned to the scriptures. This means that we have to be reading them and praying them frequently, preferably every day. Parishes have to work to bring bible readings into the daily life of their parishioners (see Bulletin 44, pages 166-167; no. 45, pages 229-231).

Until that day arrives, the work of renewal will be limping. Liturgy's impact depends on the way a community hears the word. As we begin to grow in our love of God's word, we will grow in our liturgical celebrations.

**lectionaries — then and now**

Although our generation has been using a distinct book of readings only since 1969, we grew up with a regular plan of readings being proclaimed each Sunday and feast day. As a liturgical book, the lectionary has a long history in the Church. A brief look at its historical background and its place in our traditions helps us to understand the gradual development of the lectionary and its present role in the liturgy.

**Jewish Customs**

In the time of Christ and his apostles, synagogues were in most towns of the Holy Land, and were also in many cities throughout the Roman empire. Christ taught in them, and his early followers carried on this practice, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles. While sacrifice was offered only in the temple in Jerusalem, the synagogue was the normal place for prayer and instruction for the Jewish people.

Liturgical services were held on the Sabbath, and on Monday and Thursday, at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., corresponding to the hours of sacrifice in the temple. A synagogue Sabbath service would be arranged in this manner:

- Recitation of the Shema (Listen, Israel: see Mk. 12:29-31) and blessings. (See Bulletin 49 for further developments of this idea.)
- Eighteen blessings, thanking God and making intercessions; the people answered Amen to each of these.
• Psalms were sung or recited.
• Reading of the scriptures: The law of Moses (divided into 164 sections to be read during the year), followed by a reading from the prophets (this order is mentioned in Lk. 4:16-21 and Acts 13:14-15).
• Explanation of the readings: A commentary or sermon (as done by Jesus in Lk. 4 and by Paul in Acts 13).
• Closing blessing by a priest, if present (Num. 6:22-27), or a prayer for peace by the president.
• Prayer for the poor.

This order of celebration is reflected in the Mass of the early Church, and has continued to influence the Christian liturgy down to the present.

Early Church

**New Testament times:** The Christian community accepted the Old Testament in the Septuagint version, a Greek translation which contained more books and passages than the Hebrew books in use in the Holy Land. A number of references to the Jewish scriptures are found in the NT, showing this acceptance. In the gospels, we hear Jesus quoting and explaining the OT. Christians began to explain it as their own; see, for example, 2 Cor. 3:12-18, and the letter to the Hebrews. In 1 Tim. 4:13, scripture is read in public, and would seem to be the basis of teaching and preaching. All scripture is inspired (2 Tim. 3:15-17), and the Good News is to be preached in season and out (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

**Gradually** the Christians began to read the letters of the apostles to the churches (see 1 Thess. 5:27), as well as letters from popes (Clement wrote to the Corinthians and from martyrs (St. Ignatius wrote to several churches on his way to execution). Pious writings, such as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and those which were more imaginative than edifying (some of the apocryphal gospels, for example) were sometimes used. A slow process followed in which the Church began to discern which books were to be read as scriptures, and which ones were to be excluded from public reading in the eucharistic assemblies. The canon of scripture came to be formed of those books which the Church was accustomed to have read to the people during their services of worship.

**Only from scripture:** From the beginning, scripture readings were used in the Mass, in order to instruct the Christian community. Extra-canonical or non-biblical readings were never a regular part of the Mass. Occasional readings from the acts of the martyrs were retained in Africa, Spain and Gaul, but Rome moved away from this practice because of their doubtful authenticity and questionable teaching value; some readings on the lives and deaths of the saints eventually became part of the liturgy of the hours, but have just recently been subjected to a thorough reform for similar reasons (Liturgy constitution, no. 92c).

The Church does not propose non-biblical readings to the faith of Christians. The Muratorian canon noted that gall and honey should not be mixed. St. Augustine condemned the lax practice of heretics in his time, who used other readings: *Do not bring scandal upon the Church by reading to the people readings which the ecclesiastical canon has not accepted.*

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1 Ep. 64:3.
Liturgy of the word: When St. Justin describes the Sunday liturgy at Rome around the year 150, he mentions that the memorials of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, according to the time available. Then, when the reader has finished, the president speaks to the assembled believers, and exhorts them to imitate the lessons they have heard.

All the early Christian liturgies had scripture readings. Generally three were used: one from the Old Testament, one from the apostles, one from the gospels; some liturgies had four. The change to two readings in the Roman rite was gradual, beginning in the middle of the fifth century; this trend was continued by the medieval lectionaries and then by the missals, until the reform initiated by the Second Vatican Council: in 1969, the new Lectionary for Mass provided a three-year cycle of three readings for each Sunday.

**Lectionaries Develop**

Before Gregory the Great, who was pope at the end of the sixth century, a number of practices had worked together to develop the lectionary:

- **Continuous reading**: Books of the bible were read in order. The president of the assembly would indicate when the reader was to stop; on the following Sunday, the reader would begin from that point.

- **Special seasons and feasts**: Certain books were reserved for particular seasons of the year. Augustine tells us that it was customary for John’s gospel and the Acts of the Apostles to be read during the Easter season; many fathers of the third and fourth centuries noted that the Church read the book of Genesis during Lent. As special feasts evolved, such as Christmas and Epiphany (see Bulletin 47 on the development of the liturgical year), appropriate lessons were assigned to them.

- **Local feasts and practices**: There was no universal calendar or lectionary at this period. Each Church or group of Churches followed local practices, and accepted or adapted celebrations from other Churches. Around 385, Egeria was pleasantly surprised to find that the hymns, antiphons and readings at Jerusalem were always chosen because they were suitable to the day, the celebration, and the place in question. The Roman Church organized the celebration of the seasons of Advent and especially of Lent during the second half of the fifth century, and arranged appropriate sets of readings as a firm vehicle for teaching the people of God.

- **First lectionaries**: As the Church began to include special lessons along with continuous reading, the need for a form of lectionary developed. Marginal notations in bible manuscripts or lists of feasts and readings provided one solution; others began to copy selections into a special book of readings — a lectionary. These lectionaries began to be produced in the fifth century, and usually a separate book provided the texts for each person: thus an evangelary contained the gospels to be sung by the deacon, and a psalter, the responsorial psalms to be sung by the choir.

Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) used the reform and arrangement of the readings as the basis for his reform of the Gelasian sacramentary. He prepared two books, the evangelary (gospels) and the lectionary (other readings).

- **Lectionary**: His compilation of the lessons for Sundays, important ferials, and feasts was revised during the following century, and with additions, became
the basis for Alcuin’s work around 780. This led to the development of a series of readings for the Sundays after Pentecost.

- **Evangelary**: Attempts to recover Gregory’s list of gospels from his homilies and from later manuscripts of his evangelary have shown that his texts have been largely preserved in the Masses of the 1570 missal.

- **Later revisions**: Various additions and reforms took place between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries, including a revision by Gregory VII in 1098. Around the year 1000, *plenary missals*, incorporating lectionary, evangelary, psalter and sacramentary, began to be compiled. This was done for the celebrant of ‘private’ Masses, at a time when participation and the distribution of roles were little understood.

**Tridentine missal**: In 1570, following the Council of Trent, St. Pius V promulgated a new missal, which lasted until replaced by the current lectionary (1969) and sacramentary (1970). Many of the readings for the temporal cycle in this book were evolved from continuous reading. Important feasts — Easter, Pentecost, Epiphany — had lessons chosen for their relationship with the feast, and came from the centuries before Gregory the Great. The lenten texts were often related to the station church of the day.

**Lectionary Restored**

The Vatican Council wanted to open the treasures of the bible so that God’s people could receive richer nourishment from the table of the word. By having more readings, chosen for their greater variety and suitability, a more representative part of the bible would be proclaimed to the faithful over a certain number of years (Liturgy constitution, nos. 35:1 and 51).

Shortly after the Council promulgated its Constitution on liturgy on December 4, 1963, the Consilium for implementing it was appointed. “Coetus XI” (a committee or task force) began to work on the development of the new lectionary. Father Gaston Fontaine, CRIC, then director of the Office national de Liturgie in Canada, became secretary for this group; he returned in 1974 to the ONL.

Pope Paul promulgated the new lectionary in 1969. Each of its sections is analyzed and studied in the following articles. The more we study this book, the more we realize the important role it has to play in the present and future formation of the people of God through his word.

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2 Station church: the church in Rome where the pope used to celebrate the major liturgy of the day. Examples of the influence on the text may be found in Pius Parsch, *The Church’s Year of Grace*, vol. 2, 1964, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. See also Lamberto de Camillis, *Quaresima Romana*: Stazioni quaresimali Romane — riflessione storico-liturgica. 1960, Coletti, Roma. Illustrations, xxxvi, 226 pages.

3 Consultations were carried out among liturgical and pastoral experts in all parts of the world, and draft proposals were sent to all the bishops. From their proposals, the amended lectionary was published.
LITURGY OF THE WORD

The liturgy of the word in each Mass is not a haphazard collection of texts in a loose arrangement: generally the texts are carefully selected in harmony with one another, so that the whole liturgy of the word contributes to the effect of the liturgical celebration.

When we understand how the liturgy of the word is put together (in general, as well as in a particular Mass), we are better able to study it in preparation for celebration. We know where the key texts are, which ones depend on them; we are also able to distinguish those that are chosen independently of the central texts, and thus avoid trying to join up what is not intended to be connected. In this way, we can find the themes which the Church has built into the day's Mass, and we can develop them as we should.

Word and Eucharist

Any attempt to separate the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist as if they were not interrelated leads to misunderstanding of the unity of the Mass, and distorts its celebration. The two parts are complementary, and form one liturgy. Each must be understood in the light of the other, for together they form one Mass. (See Liturgy constitution, no. 56.)

Thus, the eucharist is always the same, yet each Sunday reflects the one paschal mystery in a slightly different way. While the Mass is the Mass all year, it is evident that its celebration is different on the first Sunday in Advent and the third Sunday in Lent. The season of the liturgical year is reflected in the texts of the Mass, both in the proper prayers and in the scripture readings. Both lectionary and sacramentary help the local Church to celebrate in harmony with the universal Church.

While it is easy to grasp the fact that the liturgy of the word and other proper parts of the Mass affect the eucharistic celebration, many tend to forget that the eucharist should influence the word: the eucharist is the goal of the word, and its action is to be seen in this light.

Thus it is not correct — though too often done — to preach on the liturgy of the word without relating this to the eucharist: the word is not an end in itself, but a means to the end. The homily, summarizing and explaining the liturgy of the word, leads into the eucharist, and the eucharist leads us into life.

Sunday is the original feast day, and the Sunday liturgy is a sign of the faith of the universal Church. By a carefully arranged selection of texts over three years, the principal truths of the Christian faith are proclaimed to the people of God. Each Sunday is a part of the total plan of presenting and celebrating the mystery of salvation. For these reasons, it is undesirable to substitute other Masses for the Sunday celebration. As the Council notes, only feasts of "truly overriding importance" should replace the Sunday liturgy, for it is the Lord's day — and not other celebrations — which is the foundation and nucleus of the liturgical year (Liturgy constitution, no. 106).
Outline of the Sunday Liturgy of the Word

The Sunday liturgy is the norm on which all other eucharistic celebrations are based. When we understand the way the liturgy of the word is constructed — it has been deliberately arranged, and most texts for each Sunday carefully chosen — then we are more able to celebrate this part of the Mass according to the mind of the Church. (The outline of the liturgy of the word in ferial Masses is described in *Weekday lectionary*, below.)

**Order of time:** The lectionary presents the Sunday texts in this order, with which we have become familiar. This is the way the people hear the liturgy of the word on Sunday:

- introduction, first reading, pause for silent prayer
- responsorial psalm
- introduction, second reading, pause
- acclamation, introduction, gospel, pause
- homily, pause
- creed
- prayer of the faithful

**Order of importance:** When studying the lectionary in preparation for Sunday, the celebrant, liturgy team and readers are advised to look at it in the order in which the liturgy of the word has been built or designed for this day:

- gospel and its acclamation
- first reading and its responsorial psalm
- (second reading)
- introduction to the liturgy of the word
- prayer of the faithful

The texts are best understood when studied in this order:

- **Gospel:** The gospel text is the primary reading, the key and the foundation of the entire celebration of the word, and should be studied first. The place of this Sunday in the liturgical season should be noted. Indications of the basic thrust of the gospel pericope and why this particular selection was chosen for this Mass will often be found in the short summary at the beginning of the reading in the lectionary; similar help is sometimes provided by the gospel acclamation when the lectionary assigns a proper one.

- **First reading:** This text is chosen to reflect on or lead up to the gospel reading: sometimes it acts as a prism to show forth the gospel teaching more clearly, or as a contrast between events or personalities in the two testaments. The first reading should always be studied and understood in the light of the day’s gospel.

- **Responsorial psalm:** this is a meditative response to the first reading. The refrain sometimes picks out an important aspect of the liturgy of the day or season.

- **Second reading:** During ordinary time (green Sundays), the second reading is based on a distinct cycle of semi-continuous readings, and is not deliberately related to the gospel or other texts; it often gives an independent witness of the early Church’s faith in Jesus, and thus provides an example to the Christians of our time. In seasonal Masses (Sundays in Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter...
seasons), the second reading is chosen in relation to the day’s theme, and should be seen in relationship to the gospel.

The summary before the first and second readings provides some indication of why these texts were selected for this Mass.

- **Introduction to the liturgy of the word:** A brief introduction may be given at the beginning of the liturgy of the word, or before each of the three readings. It can be of great importance in relating the first reading to the gospel text, and thus in helping the people to listen to it more profitably.

The introduction is given by the celebrant or by another minister, and preferably not by the person who is to proclaim the reading: the variety and change of voices bring a greater solemnity and ease of listening to this part of the liturgy; moreover, the reader is reserved for his primary task, proclaiming the word of God to his beloved people. By making use of such introductions, the celebrant continues his role of presiding over the liturgy of the word (GI, no. 60).

- **Homily:** As a living explanation of the word of God, the homily of necessity relates to the Sunday readings, especially the gospel text. By his personal meditation, prayer and study, the celebrant immerses himself in the word of God; by his pastoral ministry, he grows in his understanding and love of the people of God. In the homily, he helps the members of the community to look at their lives and needs and responsibilities in the light of God’s word, and encourages them to praise God and ask for his help in this eucharist, in order to go forth and live this week what they celebrate and proclaim in the Mass today.

- **Prayer of the faithful:** When the liturgy of the word is prepared in this manner, it will be simpler to express some of the concerns of the community in the general intercessions. These may reflect some of the ideas and situations brought to our attention by the gospel and other readings, as well as by the living explanation of the word in the homily. Words and phrases from the scripture texts may be used in wording the petitions, introduction or concluding prayer of the general intercessions.

Further suggestions on developing the theme in the light of the lectionary texts are contained in “Studying the Sunday texts” (see box on pages 246-247).

When the liturgy of the word is studied in this manner, the celebration will be more unified, and will lead the people of God more fully into the liturgy of the eucharist.

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**PERICOPE**

A pericope is an extract from a book, particularly a passage of scripture which is assigned for reading in a service of worship. Pronounced “pair-ick-o-pee,” the word comes through late Latin from the Greek.

It is built on two Greek words: peri, a preposition or adverb meaning about, around, beyond, round about; and kope, meaning a cutting.

The Oxford Dictionary reports that its first use in English was more than three hundred years ago, in 1658.
SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

One of the glories of the liturgical books prepared since the Second Vatican Council is their profound but pastoral introductions, which explain the background and reasons behind the reformed celebrations. The Roman introduction to the lectionary (found in the last eight pages of the Canadian edition, after page 928, and at the front of most other editions) gives a clear picture of the basic principles which have led to the present format of the lectionary. These principles are outlined in this article.

Basic Principles

1. God speaks to his people: The bible is the word of God. When the scriptures are proclaimed during the liturgy of the word, God is speaking to his beloved people (Liturgy constitution, no. 7; GI, no. 33; lectionary introduction, no. 1).

2. The Church is nourished through scripture: A greater share in the scriptural treasures of the Church has been opened for the people of God, so that they will be nourished more fully on greater riches from God's word (Constitution on revelation, nos. 21-26; Liturgy constitution, no. 51; lectionary introduction, no. 1).

3. A greater variety of readings is provided, in order that the people of God may become familiar once more with their scriptural heritage (Liturgy constitution, nos. 35:1 and 51; lectionary introduction, no. 2).

4. Distinction of roles and books: Liturgical rites are public celebrations of the entire community. Different members fulfill various roles and ministries, but each is to do his own task completely, and not to take over part of another's role. With this distinction of roles has come a distinction of liturgical books for each role: the lectionary is now used by the readers, deacon and celebrant in the proclamation and celebration of the liturgy of the word (Liturgy constitution, nos. 26-28).

A Practical and Pastoral Book

The lectionary has embodied these general principles in a book which is both practical and pastoral.

a) Four lectionaries in one: It is easier to understand the "personality" of Lectionary for Mass when we realize that it is actually composed of four distinct lectionaries, each with a separate raison d'être, value and approach:

- Sunday lectionary
- weekday or ferial lectionary
- sanctoral lectionary
- lectionary for other Masses.

These lectionaries are described in the next four articles in this issue.

b) A source for preaching: It is the celebrant's privilege and responsibility to nourish the faith of the community by his living explanation of the word of God. In the homily, he shares the wealth of God's word with his people. All preaching in the Church is to be nourished and guided by the scriptures. Preaching is therefore to be based mainly on the readings in the lectionary and the other parts of the liturgy, which are inspired by scripture (Liturgy constitution, nos. 35:2 and 52; Constitution on revelation, nos. 21 and 23-25; GI, no. 41).
c) A dignified and reverent sign: It has long been the Church's tradition to use a dignified and decorated volume for the proclamation of the scriptures in the liturgy. Lectionaries are now prepared in each country as a venerable book which will be an evident sign of our respect for God's word. When carried in procession and when used in the liturgy of the word, the lectionary is both a sign of our respect and means for deepening it.

* * *

It takes about thirty minutes to read the introduction to the lectionary. If studied in conjunction with this article, it will help you to grasp more fully what part the lectionary plays in our liturgical life and development, and how the Church wants us to use it for the fullest spiritual benefit of all its members.

**SUNDAY LECTIONARY**

The most important part of the “Lectionary for Mass” is the Sunday lectionary. The first 175 numbers present the Sunday readings, and a few other basic celebrations, such as the final days of Holy Week and the common responsorial psalms. In the Canadian lectionary, this section is found on pages 5-415.

**Primary Catechesis**

The liturgy is the Church's basic way of teaching the faith, and the Sunday celebration is the first and fundamental form of catechesis for the people of God. This teaching is not only by word — the faith comes by hearing, Paul reminds us — but by experiencing the Christian community in the fullest meaning of this term.

The liturgy of the word is the main bearer of this educational function. In this way, the Church carries on the basic Christian education of God's children, and forms them in his ways. Sunday after Sunday, the people of God are assembled by their Father and are formed in his truth, according to his Spirit. Then they are enabled to celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist with uplifted hearts and prayers of thanks.

Since the beginning, the Lord's day assembly has been the primary mode of catechesis of the Christian people. The faithful are called together so that God's word and the experience of community in prayer and action may form them, mould them, lead them along the ways of the Spirit.

In order that this might be accomplished more effectively, the Vatican Council proposed that the Sunday readings over a period of several years would present the basic truths of the faith in the most important scriptural texts, and thus call the Christian people to profess their faith by word, work and worship.
Over a period of three years, within the rhythm of the liturgical seasons, the Church teaches us the faith as a living reality — as a faith to be lived, not just learned in an abstract or intellectual manner — by the carefully chosen succession of the principal scriptural texts and related prayers. The celebrant adds to the effectiveness of this school of faith when his homily is a living explanation of God's word for his people. In this way, the Sunday liturgy provides a basic Christian education.

The Sunday texts are not only a call to faith but also to conversion. God's people are called to believe and profess their baptismal faith — and at the same time they are invited to repent, to make straight the way of the Lord. Week after week, God calls his people to live up to the commitment they have made in their Christian initiation.

Realizing these truths, the Vatican Council aimed to restore Sunday as the nucleus and foundation of the liturgical year, and to emphasise its primacy in the year. The Sunday texts, which present the Christian faith, should not be overridden by other celebrations. (See Liturgy constitution, no. 106; Bulletin 43, on the meaning of Sunday; and Bulletin 47, on the origin and development of the liturgical year.)

It is for this reason that the proper preparation and celebration of the service of the word is so important; for this same reason, it is urgent that other celebrations should not interfere with the basic catechesis by submerging the fundamental texts and prayers proposed by the Church's magisterium or teaching authority. Those who substitute other celebrations and other texts for the Sunday liturgy are not thinking with the Church or working to build up the faith.

General Arrangement

Three readings are provided for each Sunday Mass, as described above in Liturgy of the word. Some points about the general arrangement of the Sunday lectionary:

Cycles: The Sunday readings are arranged in a three-year cycle, so that over this period the Christian people hear the principal scriptures proclaimed. During year A, the readings are selected, where possible, from the gospel according to St. Matthew. Year B is based on Mark, and C presents Luke. St. John’s gospel is used for the final Sundays of Lent and during the Easter season; a series of Sundays (17th to 21st Sundays in ordinary time, year B) presents the sixth chapter of the gospel according to John (see Bulletin 39, page 141).

In 1975, we are in year A, and in Advent, year B begins. A table of the years is presented at the beginning of the lectionary (page 4) and sacramentary (page 82). The mathematical formula for calculating the cycles — for any who are so inclined — is described in the lectionary introduction, no. 3b.

Seasonal: The seasonal section of the Sunday lectionary revolves around the feasts of Easter and Christmas, including a period of preparation (Lent, Advent), the central feast, and a period of reflective joy (Easter time, Christmas season). A final feast now closes the two seasons: Pentecost Sunday, and the baptism of

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1. See Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, CCC, 1974; and Bulletin 51 on Christian initiation.
the Lord. During these seasons, the readings are chosen to be in harmony with the theme of the gospel.

○ Lent and Easter: The gospels for the first two lenten Sundays (Jesus' temptation and transfiguration) lead us into the work of the season: preparing in a penitential spirit for the celebration or renewal of our baptism at Easter (see Liturgy constitution, no. 109). The next three Sundays present three major texts in year A: water, light, life. Passion Sunday opens the Holy Week celebration, and brings us through the paschal fast to the Easter vigil. (Further help for all the Sundays and weekdays from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday is given in Homily Aids for Lent, from CCC Publications Service.)

With the vigil Mass we begin the feast of Easter and the fifty days of celebration, the great Sunday. During this time, the gospels are mainly from St. John, and proclaim the risen Lord and his Spirit living among us. The Easter season closes with the celebration of Pentecost, and ordinary time resumes.

○ Advent and Christmas: The Advent gospels continue the eschatological themes of the final Sundays in ordinary time, and move us toward the celebration of thanks for the incarnation (see Bulletin 36, page 245).

On the first Sunday in Advent, the Son of Man is coming as judge; the second week, we are to make straight the ways of the Lord. The third Sunday presents John the baptist as a witness, proclaiming Christ as the one who is to come. On the last Sunday, the story of the incarnation is presented from the viewpoints of Mary and Joseph.

It is important to note the constant theme running through the Christmas season and its time of preparation during Advent: Jesus Christ is Lord, savior, Emmanuel, the Word of God, Son of Man, judge. The emphasis is strongly Christocentric and theological. We proclaim Christ as he is today, the risen Lord among us, rather than as perpetual bambino.

The original Mass for Christmas (now the Mass during the day) thunders forth the message: the Word has become flesh, and dwells among us. When illumined by this truth, the texts used in the rest of the season are kept in focus.

The feast of the holy family receives strength when we widen the horizon of the gospel passages: the flight into Egypt (year A) provides a background for the new exodus; the presentation (year B) and the child in the temple (year C) need to be seen as the Lord entering his temple (see Ps. 24, sung on February 2).

Epiphany is the manifestation of God's love for us in Christ (see Jn. 3:16-17, Eph. 1:3-10; see also Bulletin 47, pages 23-27). It continues the theme of the Christmas season, and moves on to the Lord's baptism. Although this is the final day of the season, the manifestation theme carries on during the first few Sundays of ordinary time.

2 The woman at the well (Jn. 4), the healing of the blind man (Jn. 9), the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11). These texts may be used each year, and with spiritual profit for the serious community. They form part of the scrutinies of those preparing for baptism at Easter. See sacramentary, nos. 75, 82, 89, 436-438; lectionary, nos. 745-747; Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, nos. 52, 153-182.
Ordinary time: As the tables on p. 229-230 show, Sundays in this season present two sets of semi-continuous readings. The gospels are basically chosen from the evangelist for that cycle (A—Matthew, B—Mark, C—Luke), in the order of the text, with certain sections reserved for seasonal Masses. Because of the brevity of Mark, Jn. 6 is inserted on five Sundays during the summer of year B. The first reading in each of these Masses is chosen in relationship to the gospel. The second reading, from the New Testament, is chosen from a semi-continuous reading of the epistles, and has no specific connection with the other two lessons. It reflects the witness of the early Christian communities as they tried to understand and live the implications of the Good News.

The use of these semi-continuous texts helps us to grasp the progress of the Christian message. A good scripture commentary will help the liturgy committee to understand the plan and message of each book as it comes in turn, and to appreciate the different approach of each of the evangelists.

Helps for the Parish Liturgy

Canadian lectionary: Several features of the Canadian edition contribute to the better celebration of the Sunday liturgy:

- Senselines: The text is divided into senselines, so that the reader may prepare and proclaim the reading with more ease and dignity. Larger type (12 point boldface) is used for the Sunday lessons. The Roman numbering system provides a convenient and universal means of reference.

- Study edition: This is a copy of the Sunday section of the lectionary for the reader to use at home as he prepares to proclaim the word on the Lord’s day. This book has the same pagination and numbering system as in the large lectionary, and is printed in two colors. A pronunciation guide, Sunday calendars and introductory notes provide help for readers. This edition is also useful for personal and family prayer and bible reading.

- Guidelines for pastoral liturgy, the Canadian liturgical calendar, provides a simple guide to the Sunday and daily texts, and refers to the lectionary by number. A starter for prayer and preaching is also given for each day’s liturgy of the word.

- Family of liturgical books: The lectionary is one of a family of liturgical books which are interrelated, and which provide aids for proper celebration. These books are coordinated in Canada by the calendar. A list of these books is given in Bulletin 45, pages 245-247.

Helps for celebration: Many aids for celebration, ideas for readers, ways of preparing texts, and other valuable helps are provided in each issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy. Some past articles include:

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General intercessions</td>
<td>no. 33:84-85; 35:204-207</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right to God’s word</td>
<td>34:132</td>
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<td>Liturgy in the religious community</td>
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Sunday liturgy 35:191-194
Checklist for Sunday liturgy 207-213
Eroding the Lord's day? 39:131-132
Spirit of the lectionary 40:204-206
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Homily: no sign of the cross 48:116-117
Daily homily 118-121
Kiss of peace 122-124

Bulletin 49 is devoted to the prayer of praise (berakah) and the celebration of blessings in daily family and parish life.

Le Lectionnaire du Dimanche: Those who read French will find a detailed commentary on the Sunday lectionary in Bulletin National de Liturgie, no. 45, May-June 1974. Containing 84 pages of useful articles and tables, it was prepared by Father Gaston Fontaine, who was secretary of the group which designed the lectionary. Cost: $1.50; you may order it from Publications Service, at the address on the inside front cover.
<table>
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<th>Year C</th>
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### TABLE 2: GOSPEL READING
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WEEKDAY LECTIONARY

The Sunday readings in the lectionary enable the Christian people to hear the main sections of God's word over a period of three years. The weekday readings form a separate and independent series, but one which complements the Sunday texts and deepens their impact.

For the first time in the history of the Western Church, the ferial lectionary assigns specific readings for Mass on every weekday of the year. Every day has its assigned gospel and first reading. Some of the principles used in their selection are described here.

Seasonal Readings

Advent: The development of Advent is described in Bulletin 47, pages 17-19. The lectionary now presents two series of readings:

- **Up to December 16:** The first nine weekdays of Advent (lectionary, nos. 176-184) present semi-continuous readings from Isaiah, according to the Church's custom of long standing; some of these passages are repeated from the Sunday lectionary. The gospel readings — contrary to the normal procedure — are chosen to relate to the first reading. On Thursday of the second week (lectionary, no. 185), the gospel starts to speak of John the baptist; the first reading is chosen from Isaiah, or from a text relating to the gospel of the day.

- **December 17-24:** During the final week before Christmas (the time of the 'O antiphons' — see lectionary, nos. 194-202), the gospel passages speak of the events leading up to the birth of Christ; these texts are chosen from Mt. 1 and Lk. 1. The first reading for each of these days is chosen from OT messianic prophecies, in relation to the day's gospel.

Christmas season: The origin and spread of the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany are described in Bulletin 47, pages 19-27.

Some passages from Isaiah, and a semi-continuous reading of the first letter of John are heard during the Christmas season.

Manifestations: During this season, the gospel passages present important manifestations (epiphanies) of God in Christ:

- Events in the childhood of Christ: December 29-30.
- The opening chapter of the fourth gospel: December 31 — January 5.
- The major manifestations from the first three gospels: January 7-12.

As noted above on the Sunday lectionary, the Christmas Mass 'during the day' provides the key to the Church's approach to the entire Christmas season.

Lent: The development of this season in the liturgical year is outlined in Bulletin 47, pages 31-33. The Vatican Council has now brought us back to the twofold nature of Lent, recalling or preparing for baptism and stressing a spirit

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1 The weekday lectionary is found in Lectionary for Mass, nos. 176-509. For convenience and home use, these texts have been reprinted in Weekday Lectionary — Study Edition (CCC Publications, 1974: $10.00 each, $8.00 each for five or more).
of penance (Liturgy constitution, no. 109). Baptism and penance are now the principal themes of the lenten readings.²

- The OT ³ and gospel readings are chosen because of their interrelationship and their exposition of the various lenten themes. In general, the former arrangement of readings was kept where possible.

- According to the tradition of East and West, the gospel according to John is read during the last weeks of Lent, in order to reveal the mystery of Christ more fully. The present lectionary presents John in semi-continuous reading, with a close connection to the lenten themes; this begins on the Monday of the fourth week in Lent (no. 245).

- The great readings of water, light and life, now used on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays in Lent, in year A, may now be heard on weekdays, especially in years B and C, through the optional Masses (no. 237 — Jn. 4: woman at the well; no. 244 — Jn. 9: man born blind; no. 251 — Jn. 11: raising of Lazarus). These are the traditional texts for the scrutiny of catechumens on the way to their Easter baptism: see lectionary, nos. 745-747.

- Special lenten forms of the gospel acclamation are suggested as models for creative celebration (see lectionary introduction, no. 9, at the end).

Easter season: Bulletin 47 (pages 52-54) presents the history of the Easter season and Pentecost. A number of elements have led to the present selection of weekday readings:

- A semi-continuous reading of the Acts of the Apostles throughout the season reflects the tradition of both West (Ambrosian and Spanish rites) and East. St. Augustine writes of this custom, as noted above on the Sunday lectionary. In these readings, we see how the whole life of the Church comes from the Lord's paschal mystery — his suffering-death-resurrection-ascension-sending of the Spirit. This total mystery is celebrated throughout the Easter season.

- During the octave of Easter (nos. 261-266), the gospels describe different occasions on which Christ appeared to his apostles.

- In the following week, a semi-continuous reading of John's gospel brings out the Easter theme and complements the readings proclaimed during Lent. The teaching and prayer of Jesus after the last supper (Jn. 13-17) form the main part of this season's readings (nos. 282-300).

Ordinary Time

The place of ordinary time in the liturgical year is discussed in Bulletin 47, pages 55-58.

Gospel readings: During the thirty-four weeks of ordinary time, the gospel passages are arranged in this way in a one-year cycle:

- Weeks 1-9: The first twelve chapters of Mark are read, except for several passages from Mk. 6 used in seasonal weekday Masses. Anything not mentioned in Mark is covered in the passages from Matthew and Luke in the following weeks.

² Further help in understanding the readings for Sundays and weekdays between Ash Wednesday and Easter is contained in Homily Aids for Lent (CCC Publications, 1975: $5.00; outside Canada, $5.50).

³ The lenten ferial Masses have only two readings, one from the Old Testament and a gospel passage.
• Weeks 10-21: Matthew.
• Weeks 22-34: Luke. The eschatology of St. Luke concludes the readings of the liturgical year, and leads into the beginning of Advent once more.

As each of these evangelists is being followed, help for reading and preaching can be found by study of their texts and general characteristics in a good commentary or study guide.

**First readings:** Selections from both Old and New Testaments are read during ordinary time, but the texts are chosen independently of the gospel reading. The first reading is arranged in a two-year cycle (I for odd years, II for even years). A table of the books is given on page 234.

• **Old Testament:** Most of the OT books are heard in the first readings in ordinary time, with sufficient texts to present something of the character of each book. (Again, a good commentary provides much help here.) Selections from historical books give an overall view of the history of salvation in the era before Christ. The wisdom books are used at times to explain the religious meaning of some historical events.

• **New Testament:** The substance of each book is contained in a wide-ranging selection of readings. **Pastoral relevance** is the key to the texts chosen.

• **Eschatological texts:** The closing week of the year has an eschatological theme, and has readings from Daniel or Revelation to go with those of St. Luke.

**Choice of ferial texts:** The readings assigned for each day are normally to be proclaimed on that day.

If however the continuous reading is interrupted by a feast, the priest should look at the entire week's readings in advance. If the readings which have to be omitted are important, he may combine the rest of the weekday readings to include them, or he may omit the less important ones (see GI, no. 319). In the Canadian liturgical calendar, *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy*, the lectionary reference indicates the readings for each day's celebration; when two references are given on saints' days, the first choice (ferial readings) is generally to be preferred.

Readings used in a liturgical gathering are to be chosen according to pastoral judgment and the limited freedom of choice permitted by the rubrics. The choices are provided so that hearing a richer portion of the word of God will lead the faithful to understand more fully the mystery in which they are sharing and thus lead them to a deeper love of his word.

In Masses for special gatherings, the celebrant may select from the readings of that week those which seem most suitable for instructing the particular group.

**Creativity**

The weekday readings provide an opportunity for creative celebration, in order that the community may listen more carefully to the word of God, and be led through it into the eucharist and into daily life.

**Introduction:** When readings (especially unfamiliar ones) are introduced by a brief sentence or two, the people are better prepared to grasp the message. When a new book of scripture is to begin, a few words on its purpose, author and meaning can be helpful. The introduction may be made after the collect, before the readings begin, pointing out the theme of both readings. It may also
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Year I</th>
<th>Year II</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>1 Samuel</td>
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<td>2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-16</td>
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<td>Genesis 1-11</td>
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<td>Tobit</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>1 Kings 17-22</td>
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<td>Genesis 12-50</td>
<td>2 Kings; Lamentations</td>
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<td>Jeremiah</td>
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<td>Deuteronomy; Joshua</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Judges; Ruth</td>
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<td>Proverbs; Qoheleth</td>
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<td>Zechariah; Nehemiah; Baruch</td>
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<td>Jonah; Malachi; Joel</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Titus; Philemon; 2-3 John</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>1 and 2 Maccabees</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
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be done before each reading; in this case, a short sentence should be enough each time.

These introductions should be based on an exegesis of the readings: by pointing out a key thought, the short summary at the beginning of each reading often indicates the reason why this text was chosen for this occasion. Since the responsorial psalm usually reflects the content of the first reading and brings out its meaning, the psalm and its refrain should not be neglected in preparing the introduction to the first reading.

**Pause for silent reflection:** Silence is also a part of the celebration. After each reading, a moment of quiet meditation will help the assembly respond in prayer to God's word. When first used, this period of silence should be explained (see Bulletin 38, page 93). Occasionally it is good to introduce this silent prayer with words like these:

> We have heard God speaking to us.
> Let us think about his words,
> and answer him in silent prayer.

**Other creative steps:** It is good to take a key thought from the readings, and use it as a source of help in the introduction to the Mass, the third penitential rite, in the homily or prayer of the faithful. In these ways, the celebrant is able to retain the unity of the celebration, and help the community to offer more worthy worship to the Father.

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**HELP FOR YOUR LITURGY COMMITTEE**

Are you wondering how to help the members of your liturgy committee develop a deeper sense of their responsibilities? A special CCC publication can be helpful to each man and woman on your committee:

Bulletin 35, *Parish Liturgy Committees*, is devoted to the work of the worship committee in parishes, communities and institutions. Now in its fourth printing, articles from this issue have been reprinted in liturgical bulletins and magazines in both England and the United States.

This issue has proven to be most useful for committee members, priests, musicians, readers, and others involved in preparing and celebrating the Sunday liturgy.

Single copies are $1.50 ($1.75 outside Canada, because of postage rates). Send your cheque or money order today to CCC Publications, at the address on the inside cover, and ask for Bulletin 35.
SANCTORAL LECTIONARY

The third distinct lectionary contained in Lectionary for Mass provides extensive readings for the celebrations of the saints. This section is thematic rather than semi-continuous in nature: the readings are picked to relate to the universal call to holiness, or for their appropriateness for the individual saint or type of saint being commemorated.

Place of the saints: Since the early centuries of Christianity, the martyrs and other saints have been remembered by the Christian people. The feasts of saints give us an opportunity to praise God for his mercy toward his people. The Church celebrates the passing over of the saints from earth to heaven, for the paschal mystery of the Lord is being proclaimed in their suffering and glorification. We see the saints as models in serving Christ in this life, and we ask their prayers for us. They are indeed sources of Christian hope for the people of God.

The feast of a saint is really the manifestation of the saving work of Christ in one of his brothers or sisters. But the Vatican Council reminded us that our primary attention should be directed to the feasts of the Lord, through which the mysteries of our salvation are celebrated during the year. For this reason the temporal cycle (the seasons of Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter) should be given first place over the feast of the saints: thus the Church wishes to recall the complete cycle of the mysteries of our salvation in a suitable way.

To avoid having the feast of saints take first place over the feasts which celebrate the mysteries of salvation,¹ the Church has revised the calendar; now many feasts are celebrated locally, or by a particular country or religious community. Only saints of truly universal importance are to be celebrated by the worldwide Church.²

The special place of the saints in the life of the Christian and the community is discussed in Bulletin 45, pages 234-236: Mary and the saints; references to other Bulletins are given in that article. The way in which saints’ feasts entered the liturgical calendar of the Church is described in Martyrs and saints, Bulletin 47, pages 59-62. Ideas for the parish bulletin on All Saints day are given in Bulletin 40, page 222; see also pages 219-222 of that issue.

Universal holiness: In the 1969 reform of the general calendar, the Church has chosen saints from every century and every part of the world to serve as models of the universal holiness to which all Christians are called. In their lives on earth, the saints opened their hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit, and followed Christ steadfastly. Inspired by their courageous example and their prayers

¹ This problem arises because the feasts of some saints were observed before the temporal cycle was developed. Thus we find the feasts of apostles in the Christmas octave. At the end of the fourth century in Jerusalem, Egeria notes a similar situation during Lent: Even the catechumens fast in those days, unless they should coincide with a martyrs’ feast... But if the martyrs’ day also happens to be a Wednesday or Friday during Lent, they will come together on Sion at three p.m. (See John Wilkinson, Egeria’s Travels, SPCK, London, 1971: no. 27:5, page 129.)

² Vatican II, Constitution on the liturgy, nos. 104, 108, 111; these paragraphs should be read in the context of chapter five on the liturgical year, nos. 102-111. See also General Norms (GN) for the liturgical year and the calendar, nos. 1, 8-9, 56-57 (this document is reprinted in the Canadian sacramentary, pages 65-75).
for us, we are helped to let the Spirit lead us in the paths of Christ, our leader and our savior, our brother and our Lord.

**Ranks:** The importance and impact of different feasts varies from community to community and from one century to another. As a means of arranging priorities among saints' celebrations, the calendar has assigned four degrees or ranks to them: solemnities, feasts, memorials and optional memorials. These are indicated for each feast in the Canadian sacramentary and in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy*, the liturgical calendar. Rules of precedence are determined by the table in GN, no. 59 (see pages 74-75 in the sacramentary).

It is important to understand that an optional memorial is just that: it is *optional*. In the light of the Liturgy constitution, nos. 108 and 111, it is evident that the Church prefers us to opt out of the memorial and observe the ferial day. We should celebrate the saint's day only when it has some particular meaning in our community. It is for this reason that optional memorals are indicated in smaller type in Canada's liturgical calendar: these are the celebrations to be observed by local communities only when these saints are of local importance.

**Two series of readings:** The sanctoral lectionary provides us with a wealth of appropriate scripture texts for saints' days:

- *Proper of the saints:* Special readings are appointed for all solemnities and feasts. Sometimes a particularly apt reading from the common is suggested for a memorial.
- *Common of the saints:* Six sets of texts for certain categories of saints are contained in the common Masses. This section is preceded by the common of the dedication of a church — which is considered as a feast of the Lord.

A large number of texts — 235, to be exact — will be found in the common of saints: a far cry from the oft-repeated texts of the valiant woman's girdle and the servants' lamps and talents of the old *Missale Romanum*!

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<tr>
<th>Common</th>
<th>Lectionary Nos.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Virgin Mary</td>
<td>707-712</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martyrs</td>
<td>713-718</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors</td>
<td>719-724</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>725-730</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgins</td>
<td>731-736</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saints (holy men and women)</td>
<td>737-742</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In many cases, texts may be “mixed or matched” from various commons (see Bulletin 46, page 284). The psalm should be one which is considered pastorally useful. The common psalms and refrains may always be used: see lectionary, nos. 174-175; *Catholic Book of Worship*, nos. 172-200. A suitable gospel acclamation may be chosen from the common of saints or from the seasonal (ferial) lectionary.

A treasure house of scripture texts on the holiness to which we are called — this would be a fair description of the vast array of readings contained in the
common of saints. As a more detailed example of this section of the lectionary, we can examine the common of the blessed virgin Mary (nos. 707-712):

- First reading outside the Easter season: eleven Old Testament texts are provided.
- First reading during the Easter season: three NT texts.
- Responsorial psalm: two psalms and three canticles.
- Second reading: four NT passages.
- Gospel acclamation: four, all but one based on scripture; the fourth has several echoes of the inspired word (as encouraged by the Vatican Council: Liturgy constitution, no. 121).
- Gospel: eleven selections from three of the gospels (all but Mark).

The unmined wealth of the commons lies not in the fact that one can celebrate umpteen Masses before repeating the same set of readings. The true value comes from the freedom this variety provides for the community to prepare good celebrations on special occasions. The common of saints provides rich resources for use in Mass, liturgy of the hours, bible celebrations, vigil services, and in preparation for patronal feasts. When preparing these liturgies, the celebrant and the liturgy committee may choose freely from the texts, as long as they go together well and fit the theme and mood of the celebration, and are in tune with the pastoral needs of the community.

When used in conjunction with the wealth of prayers, prefaces and blessings in the commons of the sacramentary, the readings can be the basis for a strong celebration in honor of the saints, and for the glory of God and for the edification of his beloved people, the Church.

**During the Easter season**, the first reading is customarily chosen from the Acts of the Apostles, and the gospel passage from St. John.

**Saints and ferials**: Unless a particularly apt reading is provided for the memorial of a saint, the lectionary prefers that the semi-continuous readings of the ferial or weekday lectionary should be proclaimed (lectionary introduction, no. 8e; GI, no. 319).

This fulfills the requirement of the Liturgy constitution (nos. 108, 111). The Canadian sacramentary notes this by giving a simple reference with a preference: *Lectionary: ferial; or no. 576*. (This example is taken from June 3, St. Charles Lwanga.) The liturgical calendar for Canada usually indicates the ferial readings as preferred.

* * *

God has chosen us in Christ, from all eternity, to be holy and blameless in his sight. Through the prayer, example and encouragement of his saints, our heavenly Father is leading us to deeper holiness. Guiding us by the Spirit of his beloved Son, he is helping us, his pilgrim people, his Church, to be the children of light, the light of the world, the witnesses of the saving love he has bestowed on us in his Son.
LECTIONARY FOR OTHER MASSES

Through the sacraments and sacramentals, Christians open various events and occasions in their lives to the grace of God, coming to them from the death-resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The lectionary for other Masses provides prayers and readings by which all aspects of the Christian life of individuals and the Church, as well as the needs of the world, may become the object of liturgical prayer. (See GI, no. 326.)

This fourth and final lectionary contained in Lectionary for Mass is more than an “et cetera” section, but it needs to be understood in perspective and context. It contains readings, psalms, and acclamations for three general types of Masses:

- Ritual Masses
- Masses for various needs
- Votive Masses.

Because of the one-time nature of most of these celebrations, the scripture selections have been chosen on a thematic basis rather than from a semi-continuous reading of the word of God.

As in the common of the saints, a wide selection of texts is given. Pastoral judgment is to be used so that the prayers and readings will speak to the needs of the celebrating community. Where suitable, appropriate seasonal psalms and acclamations may help to retain the link between the liturgical year and the particular ritual celebration. The use of readings from certain books (such as Isaiah during Advent, Acts and the fourth gospel during Eastertide) will harmonize more fully with the Sunday and ferial readings in the major seasons of the temporal cycle.

Ritual Masses

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has returned to its tradition of celebrating the sacraments within Mass where possible. The ritual Masses are intended for these celebrations. Their readings are found in the lectionary, nos. 743-799; prayers and other texts are given in the sacramentary, nos. 436-456, 457-495, with proper prefaces and solemn blessings in some cases.

Texts are provided for all stages of adult initiation, for the baptism of children, confirmation (when celebrated apart from baptism), first communion of children, holy orders, marriage, blessing of abbots and abbesses, religious profession, and for celebrations for the dead.

Preparation: The readings in the ritual Masses provide a good scriptural framework for use during the time of preparation. Persons preparing for baptism, confirmation, holy orders, religious profession, or marriage, may be helped to deepen their understanding — from God's and the Church's point of view — of the meaning of the step they are taking. The vocation they are about to enter and the graces God is offering them will be illuminated more clearly as they study and pray the scripture texts.

Parish councils and liturgy committees might take a serious look at ways in which catechetics classes or other groups are using scripture in helping children
and youth prepare for the sacraments of faith; bible services using some of these texts may be beneficial during the time young people are preparing to celebrate these sacraments. A second area of pastoral concern for all is the question of marriage preparation, going far beyond the needs of the liturgical celebration; use of the scripture texts during this period will provide some help in understanding God's teaching on marriage and family life.

Some regulations for ritual Masses are given in GI, no. 330. Masses for the dead are governed by GI, nos. 335-341.

Ritual Masses may be celebrated infrequently in a parish, but they do mark occasions which are important in the life of a community, as well as in the lives of individual Christians. These are moments of which the parish family can become more aware, for they are celebrating the paschal mystery, and the Lord Jesus is present and accomplishing his saving work among them (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 6-7).

**Masses for Various Needs**

Various needs of the Church and of the civil community, as well as particular occasions in the life of the local assembly, may be celebrated by these Masses (or by services of the word using some of these texts).

**Wide scope:** Many intentions are included in this section of the liturgical books (lectionary, nos. 800-895; sacramentary, nos. 496-558): among them we find Masses or prayers for pope or bishop, and for their election, for vocations of priests and religious, for unity of Christians, for the spread of the gospel, for persecuted Christians: also Masses on the occasion of pastoral or spiritual meetings, for peace and justice, for time of war or civil disturbance. Various public needs are remembered at the beginning of the new year, for the blessing of man's labor, for productive land, after the harvest; for those suffering from famine or hunger, for refugees and exiles, for the sick; for any need, in thanksgiving. Two particular or individual intentions are also remembered: for forgiveness of sins, and for a happy death.

**When should they be used?** These texts are not intended to be an escape hatch from ferial Masses in ordinary time. While either the opening prayer or the three collects (opening prayer, prayers over the gifts and after communion) may be taken from one of these Masses for various needs (GI, no. 323), the ferial readings are to be preferred on weekdays through the year: especially in ordinary time, their semi-continuous nature calls for as few interruptions as possible (see GI, no. 319).

When a true community need is present, one of the Masses for various needs may be called for, even during one of the major seasons of the year. The particular rules which regulate such situations are given in GI, nos. 332-333 (see also Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1975, note 20, on celebrating special events: further ideas and suggestions are outlined there).

The Church is careful to note, however, that these Masses are to be “used with moderation” (GI, no. 327).
In harmony with the liturgical year: When Masses for various needs and occasions are being celebrated, care should be taken that the readings, chants and other prayers are in harmony with the current season of the liturgical year. Where possible, readings should be chosen from authors whose writings are traditionally proclaimed during that season (thus, Isaiah during Advent; Isaiah and 1 John during the Christmas season; Acts and John during Eastertide). The alleluia is not sung during Lent; where possible, a seasonal responsorial psalm may be chosen (lectionary, nos. 174-175; CBW, nos. 172-200).

Votive Masses

Around 788, when Alcuin was preparing a sacramentary for use in the kingdom of the Franks, he included a number of votive formularies for each day of the week: Masses in honor of the Trinity on Sunday, in honor of the cross and passion on Friday, and in honor of Mary on Saturday were to last through many centuries, and to shape contemporary piety. At times in the past, these votive formularies overrode the proper celebrations of the seasons.

In the present reform, votive Masses may be celebrated in honor of the mysteries of the Lord, or in honor of Mary and the other saints. A votive Mass is a thematic celebration, concentrating on one aspect of God's love as revealed in the scriptures and in the life of the Church. Refreshed at this font of the Spirit, we return to the full community celebration of the liturgy on the Lord's day.

The lectionary (nos. 896-929) gives texts or references for votive Masses under these titles: Holy Trinity, Holy Eucharist, Holy Cross, Sacred Heart, Precious Blood, Holy Name, Holy Spirit, all or one of the apostles. The sacramentary (nos. 559-577) adds Masses in honor of Mary (by reference to the common), angels, St. Joseph, Peter and Paul, and all saints.

Though it states that these Masses may be "freely chosen" when this is in accordance with the piety of the people,¹ the General Instruction also says that they are among those Masses which are to be "used with moderation." The full choice of readings and prayers now permitted by the calendar provides sufficient variety for the average community (GI, nos. 327, 329c).

A few votive Masses are currently in common use:

- **Sacred Heart**: Celebrated on the first Friday of some months, this is now regulated by the general rules for all votive Masses: see GI, nos. 310, 327-334; Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy 1975, notes 23 and 13d.

- **Our Lady's Saturday**: This Mass may be celebrated on ferial Saturdays in ordinary time, when no other memorial or feast is being celebrated (see Guidelines — 1975, notes 24 and 13d). Present liturgical books make no mention of the observance of the first Saturday in the month.

- **Holy Eucharist**: This votive Mass is usually celebrated at the time of the solemn annual exposition (formerly known as the forty hours). Some suggestions for its better celebration are described in Bulletin 48, pages 125-133.

¹ The message of the Second Vatican Council is that our piety — as individuals who are incorporated by Christ into the life of his Church on earth — must be centered in Christ and the eucharist, nourished by the scriptures, and exercised in the loving service of man: it is thus that we serve God, and show our love for him. Coming after a time of subjective and individual piety, modern piety needs to be in close relationship with the liturgy: see Liturgy constitution, no. 13, for some thoughts on popular devotions.
Because they float around outside the regular framework of the liturgical year, care needs to be exercised in the use of votive Masses, lest one aspect of devotion be overemphasized. A balanced piety is promoted by the overall arrangement of the Church's liturgical year; for this reason it is preferable to let the spirit and power of the entire liturgy penetrate our lives with saving grace as the Church unfolds the mystery of Christ during the year (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 14, 102).

In place of votive Masses, a community might consider an occasional bible service using these readings and prayers.

Children's Lectionary

While not published as an official part of the Lectionary for Mass, some thought has been given to a particular lectionary for use with children. In its Directory for Masses with children, the Congregation for Divine Worship gave some clear directions for the liturgy of the word. Some of these are briefly indicated below:

- The reading of scripture is always to be included (no. 41). The gospel is never to be omitted (no. 42).
- When necessary, other suitable scripture readings may be chosen from the lectionary or the bible, in harmony with the liturgical season (no. 43).
- Paraphrases of scripture should be avoided (no. 45). Unfortunately, some commercial publishers of purported lectionaries for children do not seem to have read this paragraph.
- Singing of the psalm or alleluia between the readings is encouraged (no. 46).
- Children should be helped in every way to grow in their appreciation for God's word (no. 48).
- The homily is to be prominent, and may take the form of a dialogue. In this way the celebrant may unfold the word of God as proclaimed in the readings (no. 48).

* * *

As we become more familiar with the riches of God's word in the lectionary, we will be able to be guided by it. It will become a lantern for our feet, and honey in our mouths. Through our faith-filled hearing and reading of the scriptures God's Spirit will lead us forward, and help us to reflect the light of Christ by our daily living. Others will see our light, and will be led to give praise to the Father.

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of all creation:
you have taught us by your word.
Open our hearts to your Spirit,
and lead us on the paths of Christ your Son.

All praise and glory be yours for ever. Amen!

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2 Issued on November 1, 1973, and contained in the Canadian sacramentary, pages 55-64. The full document is worth reading at least once a year, especially in parishes where Masses are being celebrated with children.
USING THE LECTIONARY

PREPARATION IS ESSENTIAL

In the liturgy of the word, God speaks to his people: it is a time for proclamation in faith and for listening in faith. Attempting to celebrate this part of the Mass without adequate preparation is a blatant case of sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Proper preparation by all involved in the liturgy of the word — including the members of the congregation — is essential for good worship and for building up the Church, the body of Christ.

Celebrant’s Preparation

Upon the shoulders of the celebrant (or group of priests, where several are celebrating the Sunday Masses) falls the responsibility for making the Mass a true celebration. He it is who coordinates and orchestrates the efforts of readers, musicians, and congregation. He does not do this alone, but in cooperation with the members of the parish worship committee and others who work with him to make this a community liturgy.

Each celebrant has to go further than the mechanics of preparation, such as choice of texts, themes and hymns. More important is the spiritual side: his personal preparation by fervent prayer for himself, for the readers, musicians, liturgy committee and parishioners, for those who come and those who stay away, and for the entire Church. The celebrant’s preparation of the scriptural and liturgical texts needs to be more than just a cursory glance: some hours of study and research in modern books of exegesis and liturgical studies will be required if the Sunday texts are to reveal their full meaning to him as leader of the celebration. His personal prayer and penance, his daily reading of the bible and celebration of the liturgy of the hours — if truly sincere and regular — will enable him to become truly steeped in the word of God; shaped and formed by the Spirit’s guidance, his mind and heart will be those of a shepherd of God’s people, ready to lead and nourish them with the word and bread of life.

If such expectations may seem too demanding, we should merely ask ourselves: How else can a priest prepare to let God’s work be carried on through his ministry? God’s people have the right to be nourished and formed by the richness of his word.

Preparing with the Liturgy Team

Every eucharistic celebration is a hierarchical celebration of the entire Church gathered in this community. Both the preparation and the celebration of the liturgy is the concern of the entire community, with each person carrying out his full role and not taking over someone else’s (see Liturgy constitution, no. 28). Leadership is to be given by the priest.

The celebrant does this by inviting other members of the parish to work with him as a team, so that together they can make their liturgy the best possible worship that their community can offer to God. This team is the parish liturgy committee, or serves as part of this committee.

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Forming a liturgy committee: If the parish does not have an active liturgy or worship committee, it will find much help for forming one — or bringing new life into it — in Bulletin 35, Parish liturgy committees.

Liturgy team: In cooperation with the priest or priests of the parish, the liturgy committee may wish to form one or more small teams to work on preparing and developing the Sunday liturgy. One team may prepare the Masses for every week, or several teams may take turns, so that each team is responsible for the celebrations every second or third Sunday. Other arrangements may be worked out according to local needs and circumstances, but care should be taken that the liturgy is developed in a regular way, and not subject to erratic and upsetting changes each week. When the team has representatives of the readers and of the musicians as active members, more effective planning and preparation may be achieved.

Responsibilities: After a careful study of the liturgy and theme of the Sunday (see box below on “Studying the Sunday texts”), the committee or liturgy team should plan the day’s liturgy, and then work with others to make the necessary preparations.

- Planning: In planning the Sunday liturgy, the team should have but one standard: to do their best to make each liturgical celebration the best possible for this community at this stage of its maturity. Good liturgy will be achieved by positive efforts rather than by gimmicks or by disobedience to the Church’s guidance and laws. (Persons who are tempted to enliven liturgy by “doing their own thing” should remember that liturgy is not their action alone or primarily: it is first of all the prayer and worship of Christ and his Church. God is honored by humble service, not by disregard for the leadership given by his Church.)

Good planning will never be shortsighted: it needs to involve future developments too. In what ways can the parish worship be improved? What can be done to help priests, readers, musicians, servers, ushers, teachers and all parishioners grow in their understanding and celebration of liturgy? What resources, guidance and changes are necessary to bring this about? How can the parish become a better community in faith?

In planning the Sunday liturgy, the team will need to decide on any special arrangements, and will coordinate the efforts of all the groups involved in preparing for the liturgical celebration.

- Preparation includes a number of functions, some of which may be delegated to other parishioners:
  - developing the introduction to the Mass, in cooperation with the celebrant or minister who is to give it.
  - working with the celebrant to choose appropriate options among the prayers and blessings of the Mass; discussing possibilities for the homily.
  - selecting readers, preparing introductions to the readings (to all three together, or to each one separately); further details are suggested below (see “Preparation of readers”).
  - selection of the music and hymns (see “Musical preparation”).
  - developing the petitions for the prayer of the faithful, and if desired, working with the celebrant in preparing his invitation and the concluding prayer.
  - selecting and preparing servers, ushers, persons involved in processions.
— helping the parishioners to enter more fully into the celebration (see “Community preparation”).
— working to prepare banners, posters and other articles of this nature for special times; also bulletin inserts, when needed.
— cooperating with the teachers and students in parish schools, with youth groups and other parish organizations, so that they may be able to take an appropriate part, at least for particular Sundays.

In all these preparations, the celebrant should be ready to give leadership and guidance, so that the ensuing liturgy will be good worship according to the mind of the Church.

Preparation of Readers

**Basic training:** Suggestions on Designing training for readers are given in Bulletin 46, pages 313-318. Parishes should ask their diocesan liturgical commission to help them give adequate training to their readers: occasionally, perhaps each year, some further training should be provided in reading techniques, in preparation of Sunday readings, and in proper ways to carry and use the lectionary (see Bulletin 46, pages 310-312).

**Spiritual preparation:** Readers need to be encouraged to ground their lives in the word of God. Each day they should expose their lives to the light of God's Spirit by reading the scriptures — perhaps from Weekday Lectionary: Study Edition, in harmony with the Church's program of scripture reading, or directly from the New Testament. Prayer — based on the gospels and the psalms, perhaps on some parts of the liturgy of the hours — will help readers to become more aware of their spiritual responsibility to live what they proclaim, and to prepare seriously for reading God's word to his people.

An annual day of renewal and recollection for readers could provide additional motivation and spiritual guidance for readers, and help them to renew their dedication and fervor. Such a day could be held by one parish or by several parishes together, or could be arranged by a diocesan or area liturgy commission. The day should concentrate more on prayer in and from the scriptures and on the meaning of God's word in their lives and in the liturgy, rather than on the techniques of reading — these belong rather to an occasional day of further training.

**Numbers:** On Sunday, when there are several readings to be proclaimed, it is better to have them read by different readers (GI, no. 71). Where possible, a cantor or leader of song should lead the people in the responsorial psalm.

**Preparation for Sunday’s liturgy:** Taking the theme and introductions prepared by the liturgy team, the readers will be able to begin their preparation for Sunday. But they still need help on the meaning and background of the texts they are to proclaim, as well as on any pronunciation and textual problems they may face. Resources should be made available so that they may prepare more fully to carry out their responsibility to the people of God.

**Sunday Lectionary — Study Edition** is a copy of the Sunday section of the lectionary for the reader to keep at home, and to use in preparation for proclaiming the word on the Lord’s day. Its pronunciation guide provides simple and acceptable pronunciations to all proper names in the Sunday texts (study edition, pages 420-425).
Musical Preparation

The music to be used during the Sunday Mass is to be chosen according to a number of criteria: the season of the liturgical year, the scriptures and theme of the Mass or Sunday, the pastoral needs and the musical ability of the community, and the various parts and actions of the Mass.

- *The theme* of the season and of the Sunday, the general background of the readings, and the general thrust of the day's liturgy will be provided by the work of the liturgy committee. Working with this committee or with one of its teams, the choir and musicians choose appropriate music, psalms, hymns, and acclamations for this particular celebration.

- *The relationship of the music* to the various parts and actions in the Mass must also be taken into consideration. It is important to encourage the members of the community to sing the three acclamations during the eucharistic prayer (at the end of the preface, after the narrative of institution, and the

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Studying the Sunday Texts

The following outline can be of use to the celebrant, liturgy team, readers, musicians, teachers and others who wish to study the liturgical texts for a Sunday or feast day Mass. The theme should be derived from the liturgy, and not imposed upon it.

“Studying” does not refer to intellectual examination only: those involved need to pray, to meditate, and to read over these texts and their background in a spirit of faith, for this is the word of the Lord to his beloved people.

1. **Seasonal motif:** The general spirit or theme of the liturgical season and the place held in it by the Sunday in question should be discussed; the opening and closing Sundays, for example, will have distinct functions within the broad framework of any season.

2. **Basic readings:** The texts are best understood when studied in this order, for this is the way the liturgy of the word was built or developed as the lectionary was being prepared:
   - gospel; acclamation, if proper
   - first reading: responsorial psalm;
   - (second reading, except in ordinary time)
   - sacramentary texts: Mass of the day, prefaces, solemn blessing.

- **Gospel:** The gospel text is the major reading, and should be studied first. Indications of the basic thrust of the gospel and why this particular selection was chosen for this Mass will often be found in the short summary at the beginning of the reading in the lectionary, and in the acclamation when a proper one has been assigned by the lectionary.

- **First reading:** This text is chosen to reflect on or lead up to the gospel reading; sometimes it acts as a prism to show forth the gospel teaching more clearly, or as a contrast between events or personalities in the two testaments. But this first reading should always be studied and understood in the light of the day's gospel. The *responsorial psalm* is a...
great Amen which concludes this prayer). Processions should be accompanied by song (or at least music) at the entrance, preparation of gifts, communion and recessional. The responsorial psalm and the gospel acclamation are important, and should not be neglected. The Lord’s prayer, Lord, have mercy, Lamb of God, and the usual dialogue between celebrant and people are also enhanced by singing.

While not every one of these moments need be celebrated in song each week, it is desirable that the parish committee work to help the community become familiar with all of these.

- **Instrumental music:** There are times for using instrumental music, solo singing, or singing by the choir while the community listens and reflects. A balance should always be sought, so that the ministry of music may lead the community to give greater and better worship to the Father.

- **Resources:** Guidance on the type of music to accompany the various moments of the celebration may be found in the General Instruction, and in the meditative response to the first reading. The refrain sometimes picks out an important aspect of the day’s liturgy.

- **Second reading:** During ordinary time (green Sundays), the second reading is based on a distinct cycle of semi-continuous readings, and is not deliberately related to the gospel or other texts; it may happen to provide an independent witness of the early Church’s faith in Jesus as an example to the Christians of today. In seasonal Masses (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter seasons), the second reading is chosen in relation to the day’s theme, and should be seen in relationship to the gospel.

- The **Summary** before the first and second readings provides some indication why these texts were selected for this Mass.

- **Sacramentary texts:** When viewed in the light of the gospel and other lectionary texts, the prayers of the Mass of the day, proper or seasonal prefaces, and an appropriate solemn blessing or prayer over the people may also provide help in finding or expressing the theme of the Mass.

3. **Today’s theme:** After the study described above, the theme or thrust of this Sunday’s Mass should be easily derived from the gospel text, seen in the light of the first reading and psalm (and sometimes of the second reading). While several themes may be found in one Mass, it is best to choose the one that seems most appropriate for this community in the light of the season and the needs of the universal Church.

Perhaps the best way to express the theme is a concrete statement related to Christ. Instead of choosing “Thanksgiving” or “Gratitude” as the theme, the liturgy committee could describe it in this way: Jesus thanks God for his gifts. Another way that involves the community a little more closely: We join the Lord Jesus in thanking God for his gifts.

Once this theme has been determined clearly, everyone involved in the liturgical celebration can relate his ministry and participation to it more clearly.
pastoral notes in *Guidelines — 1975* (especially notes 1-9, and 35). *Catholic Book of Worship*, in its choir edition, provides the parish musicians with everything needed for a satisfactory Sunday liturgy, the pew edition places the required music in the hands of the congregation. Most issues of this Bulletin offer ideas and suggestions for better musical celebration of the liturgy. Many diocesan commissions offer guidance to parishes on music in the liturgy.

- *Spiritual formation:* The spiritual formation of musicians and singers must not be neglected, so that they may perceive their full role within the community of worship. In this way they will be helped to use their God-given talents for his glory and for the building up of his people.

Until music fulfills its proper place in the regular Sunday eucharist, the parish liturgy will not be able to reach the heights of which it is capable.

**Community Preparation**

St. Paul gave thanks that the people of Thessalonika had heard and accepted God's message, not as man's teaching but as God's (1 Thess. 1:2-13). The parish liturgy team can provide help so that the people of the parish will be more ready to listen to the word with proper dispositions (it is worth reading paragraphs 11 and 19 of the Liturgy constitution in this light).

- *Background preparation:* The people in any parish need constant help if they are to grow in their use, understanding and love of God's word in the bible. Until this becomes reality, all the efforts at full liturgical celebration will be hindered. Some ideas on helping people to understand and use scripture in their lives are contained in *Home and School*, in this issue. The entire issue of Bulletin 44, *People of prayer*, is on the prayer life of the parish.

It is also good to prepare people for a new season or time of the liturgical year. A week or two before Advent or Lent, for example, articles or inserts in the parish bulletin could help parishioners to begin thinking about the coming season, and about its implications for their lives.

- *Setting the mood for this Mass:* In preparation for a particular Sunday, the liturgy committee can help people to prepare more fully for the celebration. The theme can be described in the previous week's bulletin: a brief paragraph outlining the theme, a thought for home practice, and perhaps a two-line prayer for daily use during the week. People should also be encouraged to read over the liturgy of the word in preparation for the following Sunday.

When parishioners arrive at church on Sunday, banners and posters can set the mood of the day or season, at least on special occasions. The vestments, floral decoration or its absence, and lighting can also help.

- *Help during this Mass:* As Mass is being celebrated, the psalms and hymns, processions, the dignity of the ministers and servers, the manner of carrying the lectionary, the respect with which God's word is proclaimed and heard, the way the readers have prepared the text, the way they dress, and especially the way they live what they proclaim: all these have an influence on how people receive the word of God.
Well prepared introductions to the Mass and to the readings will also help members of the assembly to listen with greater attention and benefit as the scriptures are proclaimed. When they sing the psalm refrain — at least one of the common refrains — they are fixing God's message a little more firmly in their awareness. In the homily, the celebrant helps them to assimilate the scriptures so that they may benefit more fully from the liturgy of the word. He also leads them into the liturgy of the eucharist, and thus into daily life in the week ahead.

Follow up: At least occasionally, it might be helpful to suggest actions, prayers or thoughts for use during the week as a result of the Sunday celebration. This could be done through the parish bulletin.

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**HYMN FOR MIDDAY PRAYER**

*The Church encourages us to pray during the day, to pause in our work and turn to the Lord. Midday prayer can provide a beneficial moment of prayer in a community, rectory, school or home.*

*Here is a hymn * which may be sung at midday prayer or at another suitable time. It may be sung to the music given in nos. 283, 409 or 424 in Catholic Book of Worship, or to any other music for the long meter (LM: see the metrical index of tunes in the choir edition, page ix).*

O Father, listen to our prayer
And guard your children with your care.
We pause amid our work to pray
And ask your blessing through this day.

Upon your Church your graces pour:
Protect us now and evermore.
Deliver us from sin and sloth,
And aid us in our spirit's growth.

May peace be given to all lands
And food to all with empty hands.
May all our work be for your praise,
And lead us in salvation's ways.

O Father, may our work for you
Rebuild your Church and make it new.
We honor Son and Spirit too:
All glory, honor, praise to you! Amen!

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*O Father, listen to our prayer: words copyright © 1975, CCC Publications, Ottawa. All rights reserved.*
CELEBRATING THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Some simple suggestions are provided here to make the celebration of the liturgy of the word more effective. Making these arrangements is part of the normal preparation for every Sunday's liturgy.

Place of the Word

When we are proud of trophies or diplomas or documents of recognition, we place them prominently on a mantle piece, in a display cabinet, or in another spot where they can be easily seen by all who come into our home. Our legitimate pride is evident.

A similar and even greater respect should be evident in the way we handle the lectionary — the book of God's word — during our liturgical celebrations. Its normal place of honor, the Church tells us, is on the altar (for the gospel book), or on the lectern: see GI, nos. 84, 149, 272.

Reserved for the word: The lectern is the place reserved for the proclamation of the word of God. When the scriptures are proclaimed, it is God who is speaking to his people (see GI, no. 9; Liturgy constitution, no. 7). Only the scripture readings are to be proclaimed from here; the responsorial psalm and the homily may be given here also.

The lectern, however, is not the place from which announcements are made, or hymn numbers proclaimed. These belong to a leader of song or to another minister (perhaps the word “commentator” is due for a change?), and should be handled from another place (see GI, no. 272).

How many lecterns? The present rite calls for one permanent lectern (see GI, no. 272), reserved for God's word and for those who proclaim it. Its appearance should reflect the respect and reverence we show to the word of the Lord. A temporary stand or less prominent one is used for other persons, as described below.

Sound Systems

A poor sound system or readers who do not read clearly: these are often heard as excuses for poor reading, thus encouraging (or forcing) people to read the readings from their books while the reader is proclaiming them. Poor reading can be remedied by proper selection, training and formation of readers (see Bulletin 46, pages 313-318). Defective or inefficient sound systems need sound care from a qualified technician.

Good sound systems are expensive, but they are an important adjunct to good liturgy. If a parish uses fixed microphones, they will be needed at the chair and altar for the celebrant, at the lectern for the reader, and at a suitable place for the song leader — the General Instruction (no. 272) notes that this should be a portable or temporary stand; consideration may also be given to a plug-in at the head of the aisle (where the sanctuary gates used to be) for funerals, weddings, and other celebrations. When the celebrant has a wireless microphone, fixed mikes will still be needed at the lectern and song leader's stand.
It seems strange to find the occasional church which provides a good microphone at the lectern for the liturgy of the word, without at the same time having mikes on the altar and at the chair. This almost seems to indicate that it is not too important to hear the celebrant, especially during the liturgy of the eucharist.

**Processions**

Stately processions help the readers and members of the community by showing deep reverence for the word of God. A good celebration builds faith, a poor one tears it down.

**Entrance procession:** A proper procession through the assembled community, accompanied by music and singing, sets the stage for the opening rites of the Mass. During this procession, the reader should carry the book reverently before him: in this way, all may see the book of the word, and grow in gratitude for God's wonder-filled revelation of himself to mankind. At the end of the processional entry, the book is laid with reverence on the lectern, from which it will soon be proclaimed. The respect shown in the liturgy to the scriptures helps to express and cause a deeper sense of reverence, and begins to set the mood for listening in faith to God's word.

Full details and practical suggestions for the entrance procession are given in *Book of the word*, in Bulletin 46, pages 310-312.

**Gospel procession:** A solemn procession from the chair or altar to the lectern prepares the people to listen with greater respect to the word of Jesus in the gospel (see Liturgy constitution no. 7). It is necessary to travel a sufficient distance, since a ten-foot shuffle can hardly qualify as a procession. (Perhaps in a smaller church, the group could move from the chair, around the other side of the altar to the lectern, and go back in the same way after the gospel proclamation.) Careful practice will enable servers with candles and incense to accompany the deacon or priest who proclaims the gospel. Done well, this ceremonial adds to the dignity of the proclamation.

After the gospel, the celebrant preaches his homily from the sacred texts. He may sit at the chair, with the open lectionary on his lap, or he may stand at the lectern, and nourish the people of God with his word.

After the homily, the book remains on the lectern (rather than on the credence table) until the end of the celebration.

**Recessional:** At the end of Mass, the reader (or the deacon who proclaimed the gospel) carries the lectionary in procession with the same ceremony as at the beginning. The final procession should not be rushed; servers often need to be helped to understand and remember this.

**Involving Many People**

Though we rarely see this in full practice, the normal celebration of the liturgy of the word calls for the efforts of a number of persons. This is the division of roles mentioned in the Liturgy constitution (no. 28).

- Introduction to readings (all together or before each reading): celebrant, at the chair (GI, no. 11).
- First reading: first reader, at the lectern (GI, no. 89). All respond with the acclamation at the end (GI, no. 89).
Silence: by all (GI, no. 23).

Responsorial psalm: preferably led by the leader of song, at a portable stand, or, if necessary, at the lectern; or led by the reader at the lectern, if necessary; all sing (say) the refrain (GI, nos. 90, 36).

Second reading: second reader, at the lectern (GI, nos. 71, 91). All respond with the acclamation at the end (GI, no. 91).

Silence: by all (GI, no. 23).

Gospel acclamation: led by the leader of song, from his portable stand; all join in; if the acclamation cannot be sung, it may be omitted (GI, nos. 37, 39).

Gospel: at the lectern, proclaimed by a deacon; or by another priest; only when no deacon or other priest is available does the celebrant read the gospel (GI, nos. 34-35). All make the responses and the acclamation at the end (GI, no. 95).

Silence: by all (GI, no. 23).

Homily: at the chair or lectern, by the celebrant; possibly by one of the concelebrants. The rubrics make no provision for the all-too-common practice of "pop up" preachers who appear only for the homily (GI, nos. 42, 97).

Silence: by all (GI, no. 23).

Creed: led by the celebrant. The General Instruction gives no specific directive for the place, but it would seem that the chair or lectern, as for the following prayer of the faithful, would be suitable.

Prayer of the faithful: introduction by the celebrant, at the chair or lectern; petitions read by a deacon or reader, at the lectern; response by all, in words or in silence; concluding prayer by the celebrant, at the chair or lectern (GI, nos. 99, 47).

At present, most parishes do not celebrate the liturgy of the word in this way. In a one-man parish, while the priest has to proclaim the gospel, all the rest of these points can be put into practice. When two readers proclaim the first two readings, and a song leader leads the community in singing the psalm, a variety of voices is provided to enhance the celebration. The same is true of having another person (deacon or priest) proclaim the gospel before the celebrant preaches the homily.

Non-stop? When, as sometimes happens, the celebrant does the entire introductory rite, reads the gospel, preaches the homily, handles the entire prayer of the faithful, proclaims all the silent prayers during the preparation of the gifts, says the eucharistic prayer, and all the prayers of the communion rite (including the silent ones) — when he does all this, is it any wonder that people are beginning to complain that the Mass is too wordy, too clerical? And when no pauses are left for meditation or reflection, there is even less value to be gained from the performance: it can hardly be called a celebration!

Silence and meditation: The liturgy of the word is not limited to words spoken aloud. Time is needed for silent prayer, for reflection on the word of God, so that each individual in the community — including the celebrant — may reflect on what he has heard. We need to leave the Spirit a moment to speak to us in the silence of our hearts.
As well as the silence after the invitation of the opening prayer, there is place for silent reflection after each reading and after the homily, as well as during the general intercessions (see GI, no. 23; Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1975, note 7c, page 16).

Other Considerations

A few other points to make the celebration of the liturgy of the word of God even more effective in your community:

See its inner relationship: As described in the previous article, the readings are related to one another in different ways at various times of the year. They are also the normal source upon which the homily is built (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 52 and 35:2). Where possible, it is good to base some of the petitions in the prayer of the faithful, and some of the introductions (see next paragraph), upon these readings.

Introductions: By a few brief and well prepared words, the celebrant is able to introduce certain prayers, readings, and actions in a way that contributes to the meaning of the celebrations: see Guidelines — 1975, note 7c, pages 15-16; also Liturgy constitution, no. 35:3, as modified by GI, no. 11. (This is also discussed in Bulletin 40, pages 200-201.)

Incense: The use of incense during the gospel procession can add a note of solemnity and dignity to the proclamation of the Good News.

Proclamation from the lectionary: The Canadian Church has prepared a suitable book for celebrating the liturgy of the word, and most readers and celebrants use the lectionary as it was intended. The sign value of the dignified lectionary — both in procession and in proclamation — says to all: This is God's word, and we reverence it in faith. But to read (one cannot say "proclaim") the word of the Lord from a pamphlet or loose sheet of paper can hardly be considered proper or appropriate. What we do and how we do it speaks volumes about our attitude toward the scriptures!

Weekday Masses: Mass on a feria or weekday is normally not as splendid or solemn as the Sunday celebration: a quieter and more simple note prevails. At the same time, what we do should not contradict the principles of liturgy on the use of readers, sharing of roles, and, when possible, the desirability of music and singing. Weekday Masses can be a preparation for Sunday; many forward steps can be begun during the week, and then gradually introduced into the Sunday liturgy.

* * *

Constant care is needed if we are to grow in our awareness of God's word. A reverent but flexible celebration can lead the people of God in this community to deeper faith, growing love, and reverent worship.

May the Spirit of God guide each of our communities of faith as they prepare and celebrate the liturgy of the word. Only in this way can they celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist in a fitting and holy manner.
HOME AND SCHOOL

Scripture and liturgy form the basis of a solid Christian spirituality in the community. But if they are confined to church services only, they cannot achieve their full power. As ordinary families begin to read and pray the word of God as a regular part of their daily lives, they will become more able to cooperate with the action and thrust of the Sunday liturgy. This process is strengthened when teachers help the younger members of the community to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the scriptures.

Some ways of using the lectionary and its program of readings at home and school are suggested here. To make it more accessible and convenient for those who wish to use it, the lectionary comes in three distinct editions:

- **Sunday lectionary — study edition**: A copy of the Sunday section of the lectionary: two colors, same pagination, texts and references as in the large edition; pronunciation guide of proper names. 460 pages.¹
- **Weekday lectionary — study edition**: Contains the weekday readings, texts for the feasts of the saints, ritual Masses, and other celebrations. Valuable for following the daily readings with the Church. 1366 pages.¹
- **Lectionary for Mass**: The complete, permanent lectionary, used by the readers at the lectern. The lectionary's rich red binding, decorated with a gold cross, signifies the community's respect for the scriptures, and brings out the important place of the word of God in our spiritual growth. 936 pages.¹

Personal and Family Use

It is important that Catholics begin to realize the importance of the scriptures in their daily lives, perhaps more than at any time in the history of the Christian Church. Widespread literacy and the availability of inexpensive editions contribute to this opportunity in today's Church as never before. Together with a fuller use of the scriptures in the eucharist, the sacramental celebrations, the liturgy of the hours and in bible services, Christians are called to grow in their knowledge of God's word. St. Jerome's warning that *ignorance of the scriptures is really ignorance of Christ* must not be forgotten.

In its brief but masterful Constitution on revelation,² the Vatican Council spoke of the scriptures, and urged that they be read, prayed and lived, in order that "a new surge of spiritual vitality" may be brought into the life of the Church (Revelation, no. 26).

This vitality is not going to be experienced until each parish sees itself as a community of prayer, composed of families and individuals who are serious about their membership in the people of prayer, the body of Christ, the Church.

¹ These books are available from CCC Publications Service, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1. Sunday lectionary: $4.00, or $3.50 each for five or more. Weekday lectionary: $10.00, or $8.00 each for five or more. Lectionary for Mass: $35.00 a copy.

The Sunday and weekday lectionaries are **books for prayer**. They contain readings from the word of God, responsorial psalms, and gospel acclamations. Individuals or families may choose texts at random, but normally will find it better to read them in the order and arrangement used by the Church in Mass. In this way, their reading and prayer is in greater harmony with the Church throughout the world.

Many articles in past issues of the Bulletin have spoken of these questions. **Bulletin 44, People of prayer**, is entirely devoted to prayer life in the community. In 1974 issues of the Bulletin, for example, we find these titles:

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**Bulletin 49, Blessed be God and his creation**, teaches us about prayer of praise and thanksgiving, and offers practical helps to bring such prayer and the use of blessings into the lives of individuals, families and parishes once more.

**Using the ideas** contained in these and other resources is basically a parish responsibility. What is happening in your parish? What are you going to do to bring prayer back into the lives of all the members of your community?

**School**

The bishops of Canada have reaffirmed their position that the Canadian Catechism is to be an important instrument for the pastoral renewal of our Church. In its approach to prayer, this series teaches the child to see God as his Father: this relationship is developed by prayer from the scriptures, with emphasis

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3 The reference for each day's reading is given in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy*, the liturgical calendar prepared each year by the Canadian Catholic Conference. The readings are indicated both by lectionary number (nos. 1-175 are found in the Sunday lectionary, and nos. 176-929 are in the weekday book), and by full scripture references (to the Jerusalem Bible and other modern versions).

**Starters:** In three or four lines each day, the Canadian calendar provides some help for prayer throughout the year. The starters are brief prayers based on one or more of the readings, or the psalm. (See *Guidelines — 1975*, note 7d, pages 16-17.)
on the deep connection between prayer and life, and on the need for both community and individual prayer in the life of each Christian.

The lectionary can become a valuable resource for teachers and students. It provides daily readings and psalms in accordance with the Church’s calendar. A mine of texts is available in the ritual Masses (lectionary, nos. 743-799) for those preparing for certain sacraments or studying them: the readings and psalms show what the Church believes about these rites and their place in our life.

Individual students and teachers may use the lectionary to foster personal prayer, and it may become a resource for community or class prayer, as well as for bible celebrations. The lectionary may also be used for readings at morning and evening prayer being celebrated according to the mind of the Church (see Liturgy constitution, no. 100).

Particularly during the strong seasons (Lent-Easter and Advent-Christmas), the class may wish to read the texts day by day from the lectionary, in order to move forward in union with the universal Church. Preparation of the scripture texts for the following Sunday, or reviewing those of the previous Sunday, is made simple when each classroom has its own copy of the study edition of the Sunday lectionary.

Parish Celebrations Too

Beyond the celebration of the eucharist, the lectionary has many uses in the prayer life of the parish. Some of these include:
- Resource for bible services, penance celebrations, wakes.
- Source of readings and psalms for the sick and shut-ins.
- Inspiration for the prayer of the faithful at Mass, and for the petitions in the daily liturgy of the hours.
- Used by young couples as part of their preparation for marriage: they may read the texts from the wedding Masses, and use them to guide their own prayer and thinking about marriage; for choosing the texts for their wedding Mass, in consultation with the priest; and as a source of inspiration in preparing the petitions for the prayer of the faithful at their wedding.
- A source of prayer and reflection for readers, musicians, ministers, celebrations, liturgy committees, and all others who are involved in preparing and celebrating the parish liturgy.
- Ideas, quotes, prayers for use in the parish bulletin.
- Inspiration for occasional posters and banners (see Bulletin 48, pages 108-113).
- Sources of readings for the liturgy of the hours.
- For personal use during visits, holy hours, times of prayer and retreat, for meditative reading.

* * *

The lectionary is a book for prayer. It is an untapped resource which is readily available to all who want to grow in the Christian life by reflection and prayer with the Church. What can you do in your parish to invite people to dip into the riches of God’s word, and to share this wealth with others?
PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES?

Many challenges face today's Church in the understanding and use of the lectionary: adequate preparation, good studies, sensitive celebration, faith-filled proclamation, the use of scripture in our daily prayer and life. These are among the concerns of an active Christian community.

From time to time, questions and problems arise. Some of these are examined briefly in this article:

**Difficult or “strange” readings:** If a reading does not seem pastorally suitable, what should be done?

- Read it in context: It is surprising how a pericope or excerpt will often make more sense when it is read in its context. Adding a few more verses to the beginning or end of the reading may be required to make it more easily understood when it is proclaimed.
- Read a good up-to-date commentary on the passage in question. In the light of this explanation and the context of the reading, does it seem more suitable?
- Prepare a careful, brief introduction to the reading. The reader and the people will be able to understand it more easily when they realize who is speaking, and what he is talking about.

If the reading still does not seem to fit the pastoral scene, find a passage which you feel will better achieve the same end, and which fits in with the other texts of the celebration. Then send your suggestion to the National Liturgical Office. In this way, we will be able to make specific suggestions for the improvement of the lectionary, and will share these ideas with other Churches.

**Semi-continuous readings:** Because these readings present a series of pericopes taken from one book of the scriptures, it is wise to deepen our understanding of them in several ways:

- By reading the book in its entirety; in most cases, it is not very long.
- By reading a commentary on this book for its background, context, and for explanations of its texts; some references are suggested at the end of this article.
- By reading the omitted passages in order, so that by personal and public reading we will cover the entire book.

In this way, the book will come to life, the individual readings will be understood in context, and their meaning will become more evident. This deeper knowledge should be shared with others.

**Overview:** It is desirable to grow in our understanding of the way the lectionary has chosen particular texts for the liturgy:

- How do the texts fit into the season and its spirit? Bulletin 47 provides a clear and simple picture of the development of each part of the liturgical year down through the centuries.
- Why does the Church use certain books for certain seasons? Isaiah is used in Advent; Isaiah and 1 John in the Christmas season; Acts and John's gospel in Eastertide. What is the Church teaching us by the use of these books?
How does the Church arrange the readings over a whole season? When one draws of a chart of the Sunday gospels in one season, it is easier to note the development and direction of the season, and to realize the relationship between its various Sundays.

Why does the Church choose particular passages for particular feasts and celebrations? When read in the light of the liturgical occasion, what new aspects of their meaning are brought out? (Compare, for example, the passage from Isaiah (60:1-6) used on Epiphany and in the Mass for the spread of the gospel (lectionary, nos. 20, 816). Does the different context lead to new insights?)

Personal files: What happens after one works hard, studies the texts and prepares introductions and general intercessions for a particular Sunday, season, or feast? Do we chuck everything in the wastebasket after the celebration? Should we save our notes for next year, or for three years from now, when the same cycle will be celebrated?

Notes from a former celebration, if used with care, can be helpful, but should not take the place of new work. Rather, they can become a foundation from which we can move on to further research and study. The growth and development of the spiritual community since the last use of these texts needs to be taken into consideration, as well as personal reading and reflection during that period.

Some practical thoughts on filing are contained in Bulletin 33, pages 103-104.

Resources

Some books that will be found useful in preparing the Sunday celebration, especially of the liturgy of the word:

- **Lectionary for Mass**: in complete, Sunday, and weekday editions.
- **Sacramentary**: provides prayer texts, prefaces, rites for particular feasts.
- **Jerusalem Bible**: gives introductions, explanatory notes, context of the passages chosen. Other versions of scripture may help to provide insights into particular texts by the different ways they approach and translate a particular passage. The RSV and NAB versions are also approved for liturgical use in Canada.
- **The Jerome Biblical Commentary**: an up-to-date, thorough commentary, which may be used in preparation of readings, introductions, commentaries and homilies, and for general background information.
- **Old Testament Reading Guide** (31 booklets) and **New Testament Reading Guide** (14 booklets), from The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, provide simple yet adequate explanations of the scripture texts.
- **Preaching the New Lectionary**: a good help to homilists and readers on understanding the background and texts of the readings and responsorial psalm for each Sunday and major feast (reviewed in Bulletin 47, page 78).
- **Homily Aids for Lent**: exegesis, homily suggestions and ideas for the prayer of the faithful for every day in Lent, both Sundays and weekdays. Available from CCC Publications.
- **Matthew — His Mind and His Message** (Ellis): one example of the type of background book now beginning to appear. Excellent for use in year A, when the gospel readings are chosen from the first gospel in ordinary time, but also of value on all occasions when Matthew's gospel is used on ferials and feasts.
• Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy: the annual calendar published by the CCC provides much helpful information for reading and celebrating the scriptures throughout the year.

Other references are described in Bulletin 45, pages 245-248. The Sunday liturgy will yield its riches to the people whose priest, liturgy committee and readers study and pray in preparation for their task of proclamation and celebration.

* * *

Problems we will always have with us, but if we look at them as challenges and stepping stones, they can be one way of leading the Church of today into a deeper understanding and love of God's word.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

The complete sacramental process by which we become members of the Christian community is the subject of the next issue of the Bulletin. Ready at the end of October, Bulletin 51 will study Christian initiation in the Church's tradition, and begin to look at its place in the Church of today and tomorrow.

A penance celebration for Advent, based on the theme of reconciliation with man, is included in preparation for the closing of the 1975 holy year.

Extra copies of Bulletin 51 may be ordered now from Publications Service: address and prices are given on the inside front cover of this issue.

A READER'S PRAYER

This is a prayer that a reader may wish to use several times during the week, and on Sunday before he proclaims the word of God.

Praise to you, Lord God,
king of the universe,
and all glory to your name.
I praise you and thank you for calling me
to proclaim your word to your beloved people.

Open the hearts of all who worship with us,
so that they may hear your voice when I read.
Let nothing in my life or manner disturb your people
or close their hearts to the action of your Spirit.

Cleanse my heart and mind,
and open my lips so that I may proclaim your glory.

All praise to you, heavenly Father,
through the Lord Jesus
in the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever. Amen!
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

One hears various proposals mentioned as a way of making a good lectionary even better. Some of these are summarized here for further discussion:

Expanding alternatives: As well as the selections given in the present lectionary, some suggest:

- **Sundays in ordinary time:** An alternative second reading could be chosen to relate to the gospel and first reading, as is done during the seasons of Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter.

- **Lent:** It would be good to add an optional New Testament reading to the ferial texts. This passage would be chosen for its relationship to the gospel of the day, and thus would be in harmony with the OT readings and its responsorial psalm.

- **Masses for the dead:** Where appropriate, some readings could be chosen from other parts of the lectionary. (This suggestion was mentioned in Bulletin 40, page 211.)

- **Adding to the appointed passage:** On occasion, the meaning of the reading might become more apparent to the hearer when a few omitted verses are added. (For an example of this, try the first reading for the eighteenth Sunday in ordinary time, year C, no. 115: Ecclesiastes (or Qoheleth) 1:2; 2:21-23.)

In making such additions, one must be careful not to make the reading too long, or to confuse the listeners by giving too many diverse ideas. The pericope was chosen deliberately, and therefore any additions must serve mainly to bring out the ideas already contained in the passage.

Handle with care: In proposing changes for the lectionary, we need to walk carefully and slowly. As described in the first half of this Bulletin, the various parts of the lectionary have been designed as a coherent group; tinkering with the lessons of one Mass without seeing it in the context of the season usually indicates a lack of vision.

- **Ecumenical aspects:** In the past few years, other Churches have adopted our lectionary as one of their options. We can no longer change our calendar or readings without thinking of the effect this will have on others. This question is outlined in more detail in *Future of the liturgical year*, in Bulletin 47, pages 65-68.

- **Keeping our perspective:** Our primary task is not to rewrite the lectionary, but to use it: to understand and proclaim the texts we have at present. Possible changes should not distract us from the main task of proclaiming God's word from the Church's *book of the word*.

Any suggestions for improved texts, new selections, or other options and alternatives may be sent to the National Liturgical Office, and will be shared with others through the Bulletin.
The Word of God came, and taught us the truth. He sent his Spirit to enlighten his Church, to reveal the word in all its fullness. Thus taught by the Spirit, the Church was sent in mission to teach all nations, to bring them to faith and baptism, to enroll them in the work of the kingdom.

Today, twenty centuries later, the living word of God is being preached in the liturgy, and is being proclaimed by the living witness of Christian people. In word and work, bishops and priests, catechists and teachers, fathers and mothers are teaching and living the faith. The work of the kingdom goes on.

It is not enough to rely on books about the book of God's word. We need to come to the fountain of life, God's Word, through his word in the scriptures. As we enter more deeply into God's teaching, we strive to develop a warm and living love for his word.

Often it seems hard for us — clergy and laity alike — to enter more fully into God's saving word. We need to use more time for pondering and praying the scriptures, and less time for empty amusements and distractions. The Spirit is ready to help us, because we are carrying on the work of Christ and his Church: to bring his word to fruition in the hearts and lives and worship of all his people.

Through the lectionary, the Church presents us with the main teachings of God from the bible: the book containing the books that Christians were accustomed to read in their Lord's day assemblies. In the renewal of the liturgy of the word, the Church is calling on us to listen in faith and to proclaim in faith, in order that we may worship and live in a spirit of faith.

Instead of replying that this is a hard saying that we cannot accept, let us join Peter and the Christian Church, and respond with joy:

*Lord Jesus,*  
to whom shall we go?  
*You have the words of eternal life.*  

*Speak, Lord,*  
your servants are listening:  
*here we are, Lord,*  
ready to do your will.
ATTITUDES TOWARD CREATION

Whether we are concerned about blessings (Bulletin 49), or God's word (Bulletin 50), or the Christian community and initiation (Bulletin 51), the way we approach the created world affects our approach to liturgy. In this article, some of these basic attitudes are looked at; it would be good for parish councils and liturgy committees to discuss them as background for their work.

A Christian looks on the world as his own to use, but always in the service of God. For the earth belongs to God (Ps. 24:1), and he is its ruler and king (Ps. 103:19). It was created by the Father through the Word, and is still sustained through his Son (Jn 1:3, 10; Heb. 1:2-3). Man has been placed over the whole world to serve God and to rule over all that he has made. As his chosen people, we have been called together to voice creation's praise of the creator.

The Christian task is the total transformation of the world: to restore all things in Christ, so that he may hand over the redeemed kingdom to his Father. By using creation in a right way, we sanctify it, bringing it into conformity with God's will.

Constant temptation: From the first centuries, Christians have been tempted to stray from a balanced view of creation. Some have tended to condemn matter as evil; some have sought goods and pleasure to the detriment of a more spiritual way of life. Whether seen as heresies or false attitudes, these approaches fail to achieve the harmony that should exist between us and the rest of God's creation.

As a watchful mother makes sure that her children do not stray from the garden to play on the roadway, the Church has continued to lead us to a balanced and moderate and joyful use of created goods. In its liturgical rites and practices, the goodness of matter used in God's service is daily made evident: bread and wine in the eucharist, water and oil in other sacraments, incense and color, lights and music, imposition of hands, a kiss of peace, gestures and postures, processions and silence appeal to our senses and are used to proclaim God's glory, and to help us toward salvation. Feasts and fasts are usually in balance, though the past decade has not been too good at fasting (see Bulletin 42, Call to penance). Christianity is an incarnate faith, with an incarnate Lord, and we cannot get away from this fact: God has chosen to save man through man (see prefaces 5 and 31), through the obedient death of his Son. In exalting the Lord Jesus, God has raised us with him.

In its blessings, the Church has continued to teach us this incarnate salvation. When we bless food, for example, we thank God for his loving care, and are ready to imitate him by our sincere concern for others: the blessing of food needs to be followed by the sharing of food with others who need it. When we bless a school or hospital, we cannot absolve ourselves from responsibility toward those who work in it for education and health: the blessing leads to our deeper commitment for these places and the people they serve.
**Others share truth:** As Christians, we must not feel smug as though we possessed all truth. What we have we must share, especially by our manner of life. At the same time we need to realize that God has shared his truth and love with all nations: they have something to teach us — in parental love, in community spirit, in concern for the needy, in respect for the wisdom of the aged.

**Creation proclaims its creator:** Heaven and earth announce to every man the power, wisdom and glory of God our creator. One does not need to read or pray many psalms before becoming aware of this continuing theme, which echoes through the psalter and the other books of the bible.

God made everything, and saw that it was good (Gen. 1:31). He made the earth as his footstool (Is. 66:1). The heavens reveal his glory (Ps. 19), and the world and all it contains belong to him (Ps. 24). The Lord’s name is great and holy throughout the world (Ps. 8, Ps. 113).

Man, though part of the visible universe, has a unique role. Chosen in Christ before all eternity (Eph. 1), we are to praise God. We are the high priests of creation, and it is through us — especially through Jesus Christ, our high priest and mediator — that creation expresses its mute obedience to God’s plan.

Endowed with a free will, man has the power to obey God, or to reject his will. When man freely obeys, subjecting himself willingly to the rule of Christ the king, he is working with the Lord to redeem this world and to restore it to the kingdom of God. Man is in harmony with Christ’s readiness to do the Father’s will (see Mt. 26:39; Jn. 4:34; Heb. 5:7-10; Heb. 10:7).

**Christian task:** The work of the Christian people is to restore all creation to Christ at its head, and through him to the Father. This total liberation and transformation of the world is a gradual process. Day by day, we are to sanctify creation by using it in the right way. Created things, shared and used according to God’s plan and will, help us to come to God. Through the proper use of creatures, our contact with God can be deepened, proclaimed and shared.

Right use of creatures is good; abuse, excessive use, or use for wicked purposes are wrong. God is praised only by our proper use of his creatures. When we seek to use creation for its God-given purposes, we are seeking to know and fulfill his will; we are praising God, and are being led back to him as our creator. We are reminded of this in 1 Tim. 4:3-5.

Blessing God for his goodness, especially as expressed in what he has created and done for us, and asking God to bless his creation: these are ways in which the people of God lead all creation back to Christ as its head and king.

When we ask God to bless his creatures, we are acknowledging his lordship over creation, his ownership of the universe, and our dependence upon him. We acknowledge him as our God. In the name of all creation, we praise him and thank him, and pledge ourselves to continue to use his creatures properly, according to his plan for the universe. Creation, groaning to be released from its bondage to sin, will be gradually restored to harmony by our rightful use of it, in a spirit of love and praise, according to God’s will, his plan in Christ.

**A hymn of praise:** When we are ready to accept God’s will for us, and to work in accord with his plan, in the obedience of faith, we are able to promote
his kingdom. Christ is the “yes” to the Father’s will, the unending “Amen” of the Church (see 2 Cor. 1:19-20; Rev. 3:14).

When we are ready to praise God for his goodness, for his wonderful works for the human race (Ps. 107:8), we are ready to join Christ and his Church — in time and in eternity — in his high priestly hymn of praise to the Father.

When we express this praise and thanks through Christ (see Col. 1:12-20), and work with him in reconciling the world through the peace of his cross — proclaimed and lived in our daily works — he brings our prayer to the Father, and intercedes for us.

* * *

What is the Christian’s attitude toward creation?

We remember what God has done and is doing for us, because he loves us. We ask him to bless us and what we do for him. We bless him and praise him and thank him in our daily living, in our prayer and worship, in the eucharist, saying:

This is the Lord’s work:  
it is wonderful in our eyes!  
Blessed be the name of the Lord,  
now and for ever!  

(Ps. 118:23)  
(Ps. 113:2)

GOD’S WILL AND THE LECTIONARY

God teaches us his will today: Are we failing to see that the teaching Church is deliberately confronting us with awkward questions, asked of us by the Lord himself? The choice of readings wasn’t just automatic or accidental.

* * *

These words, reprinted from Preaching the social gospel (Bulletin 40, pages 244-251), are part of a hard-hitting article on the teaching contained in the Sunday and daily readings. The social dimension of the gospel is examined, and some pointed questions are faced in this article. Now they need to be looked at in your community.
Instead of quietly accepting the thought of empty altars in the years to come, why not take some serious steps about praying to the Lord of the harvest? A few ideas are listed here, but more can be developed in discussion with your parish council, its various committees, and other parish organizations.

- Add a petition to the Sunday prayer of the faithful at least once a month; make it a frequent petition in the general intercessions at daily Mass and in morning and evening prayer.

- Keep some positive thoughts before the members of the parish: the parish bulletin could contain a brief paragraph — perhaps a quote from the pope, or a short prayer for personal or family use — at least once a month.

- Reread the Council documents on priestly life and on religious life: use the ideas they contain in talks, bulletins, prayer, and especially in your way of life.

- Fast: on one day a month, at least, encourage your people to fast for the sake of vocations, especially in this parish and diocese. Suggest that this day of fasting also be a special day of prayer to the Lord of the harvest, asking him to send more laborers into his harvest. In keeping with the tradition of the Church, Sundays and the Easter season are not to be observed as days of fast (see Bulletin 42, page 18).

- Promote family prayer: Consider what efforts your parish community is making to help families pray together. How are you helping individuals to grow in prayer? (Many positive suggestions on the prayer life of the parish are offered in Bulletin 44.)

- Ask the sick to pray and to offer their sufferings for the people of the parish community, especially that young people will be open to the promptings of the Spirit. (See Bulletin 33, pages 72-73.)

- Encourage the young people of the parish to pray for the grace of knowing what the Lord wants of them, and for the strength to follow his will. Promote a spirit of self-sacrifice among youth by personal example and by a more serious approach to all parish activities.

- Bring all the people of the community — children, youth, young families, older people, sick and shut-ins — closer to the word of God. Encourage them to read the gospels, to pray the psalms. Satisfy their hunger for God's word and for prayer.

- Promote the lay ministries in the parish community. Ask more worthy people to be readers and auxiliary ministers of communion. See that they receive a sound formation, and help them by occasional sessions of prayer and study together. (Bulletin 53 will be on ministries and liturgy.)

- Encourage people to take part in retreats, days of recollection. Have an occasional holy hour in the form of a bible service, and help them to grow in love and thirst for God.

- Build good participation in the liturgy, especially in Sunday Masses. Look at the ways of participation suggested in the Constitution on the liturgy, no. 30:
in what ways can you begin or improve on these in your Sunday liturgy? in daily celebrations?

- Invite many young people to serve Mass. Have good long processions at each Sunday Mass.

- Encourage visits to the blessed Sacrament (see Bulletin 44, page 163). If vandalism is causing you to keep the church locked all day, why not arrange for at least an hour when you will be there each day, and encourage others to join you? Surely “ten just men” can be found to take one hour once a week!

- Follow the spirit of the liturgical year: the Church has given us a systematic lectionary to form us in God’s word, and encourages us to be in tune with the varying seasons and moods of the year (see Bulletin 47, Year of praise). It is time that we realized that the Church’s way of spirituality is universal and wise. The Church’s liturgical year is a year of grace, and one which forms all who are willing in the mind of Christ.

- Life styles: Do the young people of the parish see the priests and religious of their parish imitating Christ in prayer, penance, compassion for the multitudes? Does the life style of the clergy and religious in your area live up to the call of the bishops and of the 1974 synod?

- Parish concerns: Is the parish more concerned with itself than with others? With buildings more than people? What sort of response does it make to the missions, development and peace, calls for help in time of disaster? (See When disaster strikes, in Bulletin 39, pages 136-138.)

Many things are involved in praying and working for vocations in the Church today. Where can you begin?

I will give you shepherds after my own heart,  
and they will nourish you  
with wisdom and understanding.  

(Jer. 3:15)

FORMED BY THE WORD

The people of God find their unity through the word of God.* His word is what they seek from their priests. No one can be saved unless he believes; therefore, priests, as co-workers with their bishop, are to proclaim the gospel to all men: this is their primary duty. In this way, they are obeying the Lord’s command to go into the whole world and preach his gospel; in this way, they are establishing and building up the people of God.

God’s word is able to strike the spark of faith in unbelievers, and to nourish the faith of those who believe. This is the faith that founds the community of the faithful and helps it to grow, for faith depends on hearing, and hearing on the word of Christ.

* These paragraphs are based on Vatican II, Ministry and life of priests, no. 4.
LIFE DECISIONS


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As a professor of philosophy and religious studies, the author has carefully woven ideals and practice for college students and others. After looking at our ideals, she considers an average day in the life of three persons — egocentric, ethical, and religious individuals. The insights uncovered lead to personal examination and decision.

All who are involved in the liturgy may benefit from a careful reading of this brief book.

FOR RETREAT MASTERS


* * *

This book seeks to apply group dynamics and modern techniques of learning and teaching to the work of preparing, giving and evaluating a variety of retreats. Each section is written by a person who is practised in that particular format. The liturgy is frequently mentioned, but from a liturgical point of view, two faults seem evident:

- When a group gathers for a retreat or time of recollection, the eucharist often appears to be "plugged in" too soon, rather than being celebrated when the participants have become a group ready for eucharistic celebration.

- Little mention is made of the liturgical year or of the Mass texts already prepared by the Church as part of the universal work of renewal. Each retreat group seems expected to prepare its own liturgy totally.

As long as these shortcomings are taken into consideration, the book would seem a useful aid to a man or woman leading a retreat, especially for the first time.

PSALMODY

*Psalm for Singing — Book 2*, by Stephen Somerville. 1969, World Library of Sacred Music, Cincinnati. $1.25; 12-inch stereo LP, sung by Choristers of St. Michael's Choir School, Toronto (side A), and by the composer, with male ensemble from the Cantata Singers, Ottawa (side B). $5.95 plus provincial sales tax plus $0.50 for postage and handling. 1974, Novalis (Box 498, Station A, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8Y5).
Another book of psalms for singing from Father Stephen Somerville is a useful addition to the literature. Twenty-three settings are included, and almost all the psalms have two refrains (antiphons). The melodies of the refrains are appealing and they are also arranged for three equal voices (SSA or TTB). The melody of the refrain is usually in the middle of the harmony. This could produce a fulsome effect if the congregation sings its melody while the harmonization above and below it is suitably heard.

The record which demonstrates the book offers some interesting possibilities for using psalms and refrains. For example: having the verses recited dramatically and singing only the refrains; having the choir hum a harmonization while the cantor sings or recites the verses. Another idea is to have two cantors exchanging verses, especially in a psalm where there is a dialogue (such as Ps. 110).

The psalm melodies are straightforward and simple — getting the words in place is usually the problem. The tonality is generally diatonic; the effect is rather reverent and devotional, and at times somewhat mystical.

The record shows that the success of the psalms as congregational prayer depends on how clearly the words are articulated by the cantor. When it is done properly the rapt attention is meaningful and delightful.

Perhaps this second book of psalms will encourage the development of the responsorial psalm with cantor at parish eucharists. That will add some variety to the diet of steady hymns we generally have now.

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WORTHWHILE

_Spiritual Renewal of the American Parish_, by Earnest Larsen, CSsR. Liguori Publications, Liguori, Mo. 63057. 1975, 64 pages. $1.00.

* * *

This brief book presents some sound thoughts on the parish and its liturgy, and some practical steps toward renewal. We recommend it to all involved in parish councils and committees, especially the liturgy committee.
PASTORAL AID


* * *

In this book, arranged as a resource book for a six-session course, the author helps people to understand liturgical change, to develop criteria for evaluating worship experiences, and to help them to pray the liturgy in a better manner (page 97). Presently professor of liturgy in the Department of Theology of the University of Notre Dame, Dr. Mitchell combines a sound pastoral sense with his broad understanding of liturgy. In this book, he presents a clear picture of our Christian worship in its perspective: today's parish inherits, continues and hands on the worship of twenty centuries of Christianity.

Each generation shapes the liturgy as it is celebrated. Because of various historical circumstances, the normal amount of change did not take place until recently, and then many changes came quickly in most of the major Churches. Dr. Mitchell's little book provides guidance for understanding these changes, for working with them, and for making further changes that are needed.

Many contemporary problems and situations in liturgy are considered. He points out the happy balance needed between change and rigidity, and encourages a variety of texts and options with a stability of structures. The relationship of custom and change, of liturgy and personal prayer, of traditional and modern forms is discussed in a refreshing manner.

His practical insights, sound guidance and useful questions will help all involved in the parish liturgy to grow in their celebration of Sunday worship. We recommend this book, and hope to see it used as a basis of courses for people in many parishes.

USEFUL RESOURCE

Folk Mass and Modern Liturgy, a magazine published eight times a year. Resource Publications, P.O. Box 444, Saratoga, Calif. 95070. One year's subscription: $9.00 outside U.S.A., $8.00 in U.S.A.

Since 1974, this 32-page magazine has produced some sprightly editions. Each issue concentrates on one topic; these have included various liturgical seasons and feasts, family prayer, liturgy planning, children's liturgy, weddings, and reconciliation. Several new pieces of folk music are contained in each issue.

While generally faithful to the Church's guidelines on liturgy, the magazine does make occasional suggestions which cannot be followed. (See the paragraph on planning given on page 244, above.) Aside from this one point, we recommend Folk Mass and Modern Liturgy as a useful resource for liturgy committees and for teachers.

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PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR THE LITURGY COMMITTEE

These two prayers may be used as printed, or adapted according to your circumstances. One person may say the prayer in the name of all, or the group may decide to say them in unison.

Prayer before a meeting of the liturgy committee:

Blessed are you, Lord God, 
king and ruler of all creation: 
all glory, honor and praise be yours.

Bless us as we gather here to promote your worship. 
Cleanse our hearts from all evil, 
and deepen your love in ourselves and in our families.

Throughout this meeting, guide us by your Spirit, 
so that all we do and decide 
will lead to your glory 
and to the salvation of your people.

All praise is yours, Father, 
through Christ our Lord.

Amen!

Prayer before preparing the Sunday liturgy:

All praise and glory are yours, Father, 
and we glorify your name. 
Help us to prepare the liturgy for Sunday, 
so that your people may praise you 
and be filled with your word and the bread of life. 
Let our celebration bring you glory 
and lead us to salvation and eternal life.

We ask this grace through Christ our Lord.

Past issues of the Bulletin provide many helps for members of the liturgy committee. Bulletin 35, now in its fourth printing, is on the work of the committee. Bulletin 44 looks at the prayer life of the parish, and Bulletin 49 will help you to design prayers and blessings to give greater praise to God.

Why not get a copy of these issues for each member of your committee? Copies may be ordered from the CCC Publications Service: address and prices are given on the inside front cover.
PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

In its decree on ecumenism, the Vatican Council reminds us of the need for prayer as a means to unity. Some key thoughts for further considerations:

Unity with the Churches of the East: Catholics should be making serious efforts to work to restore or preserve communion and unity with these Churches; this is to be done through our daily activities and organizations, especially by prayer and by dialogue on current pastoral needs. In the West, priests and people should work together in a friendly way with members of the Eastern Churches. (See Ecumenism, no. 18.)

Unity with the Churches of the West: Faith in Christ nourishes the Christian way of life of the Churches of the West. Their members are our brothers and sisters. God's word and the grace of baptism give them strength. Some of the fruits of their way of life can be seen in personal prayer, reflection on the scriptures, in family life, and in their community worship and praise. Their faith in the Lord Jesus leads them to thank God for the gifts he has given them, and to express their faith in true justice and love for others. (See Ecumenism, no. 23.)

Inspired by the Holy Spirit: Throughout the world, the Spirit of God is inspiring many people to pray, speak and act in order to achieve the full unity desired by Christ. The Vatican Council urges all Catholics to accept the signs of our times, and to take part in the work of ecumenism. (See Ecumenism, no. 4.)

Praying together for unity: The essential element of ecumenism consists of conversion — a change of heart, a holy life — together with community and personal prayer for unity among Christians. Catholics should join their Christian brothers and sisters in ecumenical gatherings and in services of prayer for unity. Common prayer services are effective, and express the genuine bonds among all Christians. Christ prays with us when we gather in his name to pray for unity among his followers (see Jn. 17:21, Mt. 18:20; Ecumenism, no. 8).

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise you:

bring peace into the world
by bringing your peace into the hearts of men.
Help us to turn away from sin,
and to follow you in love and service.

Glory be yours, and honor
for ever and ever.
PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Imploring is better than deploring!

Let us pray each day for the Church, the people of God; for the pope and bishops and priests; for religious; for parents and teachers; for young people and for the elderly, the sick and the healthy; let us pray for peace and renewal in the Church of God.

One prayer that may be used with benefit several times a week is Ps. 80, addressed to the shepherd of Israel.

GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Found on a restaurant placemat:

Jewish: Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary and bless the Lord. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who bring forth bread from the earth. B. Amen!

Catholic: Bless us, O Lord, and these gifts of yours, which you have given us in your goodness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. B. Amen!

Greek Orthodox: Blessed be God, who in his mercy nourishes us from his bounteous gifts by his grace and compassion. O Christ, our God, bless the meat and drink of which we are about to partake, for you are holy for ever. B. Amen!

Protestant: Bless, O Lord, this food for our use, and us for your service, and make us ever mindful of the needs of others, in Jesus' name. B. Amen!

WEDDING BANQUET

A form of grace that may be used at the beginning of a wedding banquet:

Leader My friends, let us pray:

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Leader Dear Father of us all,
we praise you and give you glory today.
We thank you for the gifts you have shown to us:
for the love you have given to N. and N.,
for the joy we are sharing,
and for this banquet we are about to begin.

Bless us, Father, and the food we eat,
and make us truly grateful for all your gifts.

We praise you through Christ our Lord.

All Amen!