

An Introduction and Guide to the
Book of Gospels



Containing all Gospel Passages from
Lectionary: Sundays and Solemnities and
*Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and
Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead*

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
2015

The Book of Gospels

Why? When ? How?

Implementing the Vision of the Liturgy

With the publication of the *Book of Gospels* for Canada (with the NRSV translation) the provisions of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) and the “Introduction of the Lectionary” (IL) can now be more fully implemented. Now only the *Book of Gospels* is carried in the Entrance Procession of the Mass. While this may seem to be new to many, it is one of the ancient traditions of the Church. That is, to highlight the Gospels because of our belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all of the Scriptures. In 1969, when the reformed liturgy of Vatican II was implemented, there were no editions of the *Book of Gospels* available. Hence, in many situations the Lectionary was carried in its place. This is the reason the use of the *Book of Gospels* is detailed in both the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, especially numbers 44, 117, 133-134, 172-175, 194-195 and in the “Introduction to the Lectionary”, numbers 17, 36.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word

In the Liturgy of the Word, God’s Word is presented to the liturgical assembly, not only in verbal proclamation, but also in music and ritual. Singing the Responsorial Psalm, the Gospel Acclamation and even the response to the Prayer of the Faithful, can help to bring God’s Word to life for the assembled people. The procession with the *Book of Gospels*, accompanied with heartfelt song, candles and possibly incense, appeals to more than the sense of hearing by engaging the senses of sight and smell as well. In this way, the Liturgy of the Word is able to appeal to and engage the whole person. The presence of the *Book of Gospels*, carried in procession, helps emphasize God’s Word as present and visible to the assembled people. This is the reason it is important that the Gospel Procession should be of sufficient length and dignity to highlight the reverence that the Church extends to the proclamation of the Gospel as the Word of Christ.

Liturgical Symbol of Christ

The liturgical assembly itself is the original and main symbol of the presence of Christ. Within the assembly the *Book of Gospels*, solemnly carried in both the Entrance and Gospel Processions, became the first object to mirror the presence of Christ to the liturgical assembly. This predates the use of the processional cross. It explains the rationale in our tradition of having an ornately decorated cover for the *Book of Gospels*. It also explains why the image of Christ or the Cross is often found on many of the ancient and modern editions. This prominently carried *icon* of Christ helps us to know that Christ is indeed among us and speaks the words of life to us as he did to his disciples. While the unity of the Liturgy of the Word is maintained by the proclamation of all the Scripture Readings at the Ambo, special respect and dignity is accorded the Gospel in the rites surrounding its proclamation. Besides those things previously mentioned, this is also highlighted by the special minister of proclamation, the signs of the cross and the posture of the assembly (*GIRM* 60). In addition, the use of the *Book of Gospels* opens up the full meaning and significance of the Gospel Acclamation, which joyfully acclaim and welcomes Christ.

Ministry of Deacons

At the ordination of a Deacon the *Book of Gospels* is presented to the Deacon. As it is directly associated with the diaconal role, a Deacon's ministry is affirmed with its use and Sunday and special celebrations are enhanced.

Occasions for Using the *Book of Gospels*

It is still appropriate and beneficial to use the *Book of Gospels* at the Sunday Eucharist and other solemn celebrations even when a Deacon is not present. This adds to the dignity of the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration itself.

There is also a venerable tradition of using it within the Rites of Ordination. During a Diaconate Ordination, it is presented to the newly ordained Deacon as a symbol of his office and ministry. In the Ordination of Bishops it is held over the head of the ordinand

during the Prayer of Ordination. In all Ordination celebrations its use is most appropriate in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Within the Liturgy of the Word, the reading of the Gospel is the high point, and thus special reverence and attention are given to it (Introduction to the Lectionary 13, 17 and 36; *GIRM* 60). The use of the *Book of Gospels* does not minimize the importance of the first two Readings or the Responsorial Psalm. For this reason, the Lectionary should always be used by the readers and should reverently be placed on the Ambo before the celebration begins. It is removed after the period of silence following the Second Reading.

Use of the *Book of Gospels* in the Mass

- In the opening procession, the *Book of Gospels* is carried by a Deacon, or by a reader when a Deacon is not present (*GIRM* 120 and 172; *IL* 17). Otherwise, it is placed on the Altar beforehand (*GIRM* 117).
- The person who carries the *Book of Gospels* lays it on the Altar (*GIRM* 117, 122, 273 and 306; *IL* 17). It is placed flat and remains closed. When kissing and incensing the Altar, the presider may also kiss the *Book of Gospels* and incense it.
- Following a time of silence after the Second Reading, the reader removes the Lectionary from the Ambo and sets it in an appropriate place of respect.
- If incense is to be used, during the singing of the Gospel Acclamation the presiding Priest places incense in the thurible (*GIRM* 132, 175).
- The Deacon then bows before the Priest to ask for a blessing. Following the blessing he goes to the Altar, takes the *Book of Gospels* and proceeds to the Ambo, following the servers, carrying candles (and incense) (*GIRM* 175; *IL* 17).
- When no Deacon is present, the Priest himself, or preferably, another Priest, if one is present, proclaims the Gospel. In this case, after the time of silence following the Second Reading and after the presiding Priest has placed incense in the thurible,

the Priest goes directly to the altar (without seeking a blessing from the presiding priest). He takes the *Book of Gospels* and proceeds to the Ambo in procession, preceded by the servers with candles (and incense) (*GIRM* 59, 132-133, 212).

- The Gospel should be proclaimed from the same Ambo or place from which the First and Second Readings were proclaimed (*GIRM* 58, 128-130, 133, 309; *IL* 16-17, 32.).
- When a Bishop presides, the *Book of Gospels* may be carried to him for veneration. He may also bless the people with it (*GIRM* 175).

Pastoral Suggestions

- When the Deacon carries the *Book of Gospels* in the Entrance Procession, the reader(s) should also participate in the procession with the other ministers to reflect the complementarity of all the ministers in service to the Body of Christ.
- The Gospel procession should be of sufficient length and dignity with ministers accompanying the procession to the ambo with candles (and incense). The procession should also be visible to the assembly. For this reason, it is suggested that the procession should move around the Altar and proceed across the front of the Altar and the people to the Ambo.
- The *Book of Gospels* is not carried in the procession at the end of Mass (“Introduction to *Book of Gospels*”, no. 22).

Contents

The *Book of Gospels* can be used for all the major celebrations of the Liturgical Year. It contains the Gospel passages for:

PROPER OF SEASONS

- Sundays of all the Liturgical Seasons
- Solemnities of the Lord
- Triduum and the Octave of Easter
- Christmas, the Octave, Solemnities and Feasts
- Holy Days of Obligation

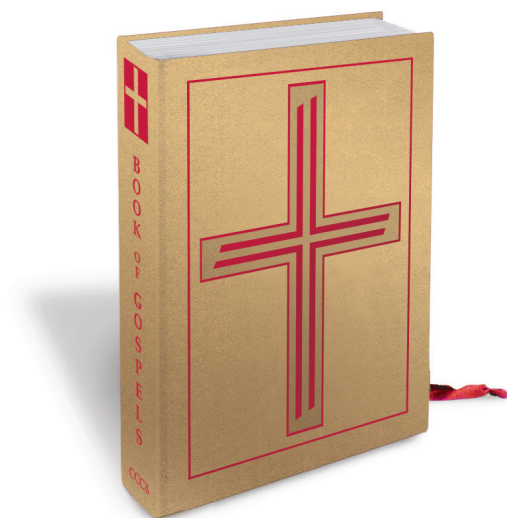
PROPER OF SAINTS

- Solemnities and Feasts of Saints
- Feasts and Memorials of Apostles

RITUAL CELEBRATIONS

- Rites of Initiation: RCIA, Baptism and Confirmation
- Marriage
- Rites of Ordination and Candidacy
- Institution of Ministries and Blessing of Persons
- Dedication and Blessing of a Church or Altar
- Funeral and Masses of the Dead

VOTIVE MASSES & MASSES FOR VARIOUS NEEDS AND OCCASIONS



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