

**What is lectionary? When did it originate? How has it been arranged by whom?  
Why it is important to know the history of lectionary?  
What are the Lector's roles and responsibilities?**

**“How beautiful upon the mountains\* are the feet of the one bringing good news,  
Announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, saying to Zion,  
“Your God is King” (Isaiah 52:7)**

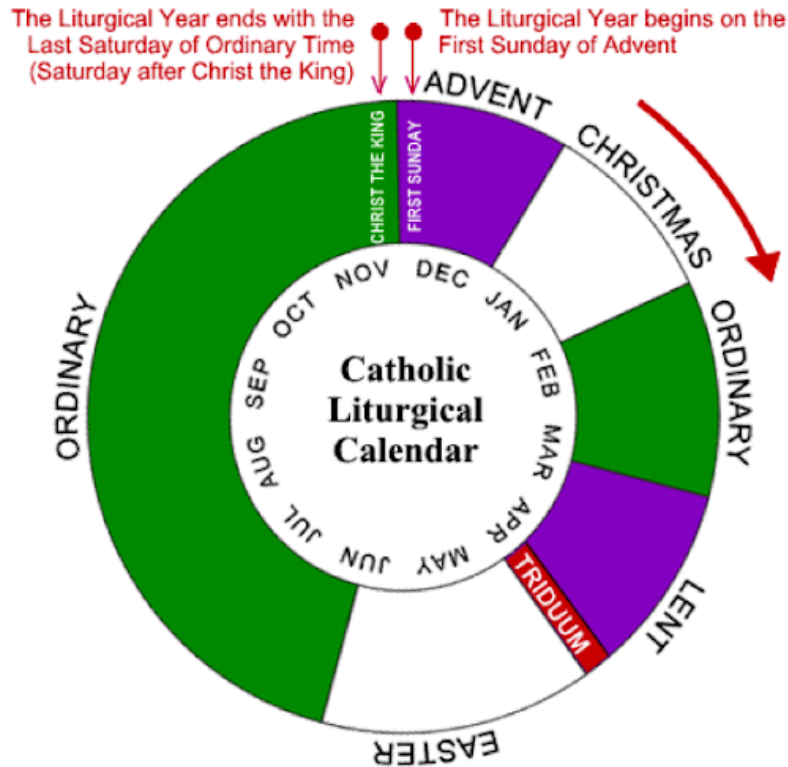
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**What is lectionary?** A lectionary is a collection of readings, selected from the Scriptures, arranged and intended for proclamation during the worship of the people of God. A lectionary provides the whole church with a uniform and common pattern of biblical proclamation. It serves as a guide for clergy, preachers, church members, musicians, and Sunday school teachers helping them to know which texts are to be read on a given Sunday. It provides a guide for the clergy to prepare their homily primarily and summarily based on the Sacred Scripture. It provides a guide to individuals and prayer groups who wish to read, study, and pray the Bible in tune with the church's prayer and preaching. Some local churches print the readings of the following week in the bulletins in order to encourage people to come prepared for the weekend celebration. We have the Missalette as a guide for better participation and some find hard to hear and understand the lector's reading. Proclamation of the word of God is a holy obligation. The lectors have to be mindful of the congregation which has variety of people: The old, the elderly, the young, the children, the educated and people with Biblical knowledge and no knowledge at all.

The origin of the Lectionary: Following the Jewish traditions of celebrations of feasts and worship, the early Christians shifted some focus from the 'sacrificial' feasts and focused on the ones that highlighted the uniqueness of following Christ. They started with the Easter in 200 A.D. The lectionary came into practice already in the fourth century, where major churches (Greek Orthodox church and Latin Church) arranged the Scripture readings according to a schedule which follows the calendar of the church's year. Some standards were identified by the Archbishops. Thus the practice of assigning particular readings to each Sunday and festival has continued through the history of the Christian Church. It is a thousands year old tradition. The early church became concerned that Christians needed to learn the entire Bible, so the Lectionaries assigned Scriptures that applied to each season, but to cover the complete Bible filled three years of time. Thus we have Lectionary Year A, Year B and Year C for the weekend celebration and Year I, II for the week days. If we follow this arrangement, we will be able to read through the entire Bible in three years time.

The arrangement of the readings in the liturgical year: We have calendars and rhythms to govern our daily lives. likewise, the church also has a calendar and a rhythm that offers structure to our worship. Different from the Gregorian calendar or the school year, the church year begins with advent—the season of anticipation of Christ's coming to us. We then move from Advent to Christmastide, when we celebrate the incarnation of Christ. After Christmas we observe Epiphany, and then Lent, when we enter the wilderness with Christ. After Lent, we celebrate Holy Week and go to the cross. Then, of course, we celebrate the season of Easter. Between the

end of our Easter season and the beginning of the next Advent season, we observe what we call Ordinary Time, or Common Time.



The Lectionary follows this calendar on a three-year cycle and emphasizes appropriate scriptures according to each season. There are four reading options provided for each Sunday: An Old Testament reading, a Psalm, a letter and a Gospel reading. If we follow the Lectionary faithfully each Sunday for all three years (what we call Years A, B, and C), we will have read nearly all of the Bible. In the four readings we will find a narrative connection. We need to know that NT does not replace or invalidate the OT but fulfills it and takes us to Jesus, the fulfillment of the entire scriptures. We (local church), by following this ages old lectionary, connect with the universal church. Just as there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, so also is there one body, one church (Ephesians 4:4–6). Christ only established one church. When we follow the Lectionary, that one church is united across time and space.

**Bible** - all the sacred scriptures of Christianity, arranged in "canonical" order (OT & NT, from Genesis to Revelation) **Lectionary** - all the biblical readings used at the Eucharist and other liturgies, arranged in order of the liturgical calendar. **Missal** - all the texts needed for Mass, including instructions, prayers, readings, some music, etc

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

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

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

1. **First Reading** - semi-continuous readings; alternate between OT & NT; on a two-year cycle
2. **Responsorial Psalm** - mostly from the Book of Psalms, but sometimes other Canticles; also on a two-year cycle
3. **Verse before the Gospel** - Specifically prescribed texts
4. **Gospel** - same each year; semi-continuous readings from Mark (from 1st week to 9th week), Matthew (from the 10th week to 21st week) , Luke (22nd week to 34th Sunday)

### **Readings for Special Masses and Liturgies:**

- **Saints** - four categories, in decreasing order of importance: Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials, Optional Memorials
  - some saints have their own "Propers" - prayers and readings specifically selected for the particular saint
  - for other feast days, texts and prayers are recommended from various "Commons" - Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church, Blessed Virgin Mary, Martyrs, Pastors, Doctors of the Church, Virgins, and Holy Men & Women
- **Ritual Masses** - incl. Christian Initiation (of adults or children; baptism, confirmation, and first communion), Conferral of Holy Orders and other Ministries, Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying, Sacrament of Marriage, Religious Profession, Blessing of a Church or Altar, etc.
- **Masses for Various Occasions** - four subcategories:
  - for the *Holy Church* (incl. pope, pastoral meetings, unity of Christians, etc.),
  - for *Public Needs* (civil leaders, peace and justice, in time of war, etc.),
  - in *Various Public Circumstances* (new year, harvest, refugees, natural disasters, etc.),

- and for *Various Needs* (promotion of charity, for the family, for a happy death, etc.)
- **Votive Masses** - Holy Trinity, Holy Cross, Holy Eucharist, Christ the High Priest, Holy Name of Jesus, Precious Blood, Sacred Heart, Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, All the Holy Apostles, Sts. Peter & Paul, St. Peter, St. Paul, One Holy Apostle, All the Saints
- **Masses for the Dead** - incl. Funeral Liturgies and Memorial Masses, Funerals for Baptized Children, and Funerals for Children who Died before Baptism

### **Concluding Notes:**

- There is normally an intentional thematic connection between the *Gospel* & the *First Reading* (usually also the Responsorial Psalm & Gospel Acclamation); but the *Second Reading* is usually unrelated, since it follows a separate semi-continuous reading pattern.

### **Who is a lector? What is his / her role and responsibility?**



**Dress and Decorum:** Since the lectors are public witnesses to the Eucharist, their behavior and dress should reflect a real respect for the role of service they perform.

**Prior preparation:** The lector has a responsibility to the whole community to proclaim the readings in a very clear way, since he/she will be the instrument through whom the people hear God's Word. Preparation and practice are to be an important part of the lector's routine. Be mindful of the audience consisting of disabled, the elderly, the young, the children, people with better biblical grasp or no grasp. Some Biblical names and places are quite hard to pronounce as they are of Hebrew and Greek languages. Better preparation is necessary. This is what we call liturgical and pastoral justice on the part of the presider, the lector and the choir. Other ministers have their own role in bringing out a meaningful liturgy.

**Time conscious:** Lectors should arrive in the sacristy area at least 10 minutes before Mass. The reason for getting there early is that this allows time for the lector to review the readings and the petitions, as well as to receive occasional special instructions. If there are optional readings or if there are long and short versions of a reading, check with the presider for the correct reading. Confirm that the large red Lectionary has a ribbon marking the proper readings.

**procession:** The lector will normally process in as part of the Entrance Procession. When the procession reaches the front, the lector follows the altar servers up the front steps, around the altar, bows to the altar (tabernacle) at the same time as the presider, and then places the Lectionary on the ambo and opens it to the first reading. The lector then goes to their seat.

After the Opening prayer, the lector waits for a moment so that everyone can get settled in place. He/she then moves toward the ambo to proclaim the readings. Announce the Scripture reading simply as it is stated in the reading, i.e. "A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah," etc. After the reading, the lector pauses slightly before saying "The Word of the Lord." It is easy to drop your voice at this point.

If a cantor is present at Mass, the lector returns to his/her chair and the cantor will come forward to lead the responsorial psalm. If there is no cantor, the lector will lead the responsorial psalm. The lector should pause for a few seconds to allow the congregation to reflect on the first reading before reading the response. The second reading is then proclaimed by the lector. 7. If a cantor is present at Mass, the lector returns to their seat following the second reading, and the cantor will come forward to lead the "Alleluia". If there is no cantor, the congregation will sing one chorus of Alleluia, the lector will proclaim the verse, and the lector returns to their chair as the second "Alleluia" verse is sung.

After the homily and creed, the presider will introduce the Prayers of the Faithful. The lector will then read the petitions. The petitions are in the booklet on the ambo shelf. The lector may wish to look these over before Mass and make sure that the booklet is open to the proper date. Please move up to the ambo near the end of the Creed, so that there doesn't have to be a delay from the Creed to the Intercessions. Also, please do not leave the ambo until after the presider's prayer is finished. This is less distracting. As a courtesy, the lector may wish to return the Lectionary to the page with the first reading, particularly at the Saturday evening Mass. After the presider concludes the Prayers of the Faithful, the lector may be seated in the congregation.

Readings are available online at [www.usccb.org/nab](http://www.usccb.org/nab), or you may find them in the Missalette or you can buy the Sunday liturgy book. There is no point in being a lector if we are not reading clearly, slowly and loudly enough so that people can understand the reading. The liturgy is a public act. The public have every right to get a meaningful liturgy. The priest is 60 % responsible for making it and other 40% lies upon the lector, choir and sacristans, altar servers and so on. The public come with a deep desire to experience the Lord in the word of God and in the Holy Eucharist. The priest as an Altus Christus is responsible along with the liturgical ministers to make it happen so that the participants leave the church completely nourished.

**GOOD LUCK**