

The Readings

The readings are passages taken from both the Old and the New Testaments of the Sacred Scripture. They are the most important element of the Liturgy of the Word for the following reasons:

1. They call to mind, announce and, in a certain way, make present the wonders worked by God in the History of Salvation.
2. Through them, God continues speaking to the men of every place and time.
3. In them and through them Christ makes Himself present.
4. The faith of the faithful receives nourishment from them to participate fruitfully in the offering and communion of the sacrifice of Christ.
5. The community gathered together for the Eucharist receives from them a great teaching on the Christian mysteries.

In the first celebrations, the idea was simply to read the Sacred Scripture. For the Old Testament, they would read a series of passages that were chosen from what was normally read in the synagogue. For the New Testament, they would make a continuous reading, at least of the apostolic letters, mostly St. Paul. The length of the reading depended on the time and was established by the bishop. After the VI century, there were already books that con-

Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning...

Sacrosanctum Concilium, Pope Paul VI, 24

tained the readings (lectionaries). In some places, such as in Milan, Hispania or Gaul, there were three readings. In Rome, two were read.

The minister of the readings that are not from the Gospel is the lector. The reading of the Gospel corresponds to the deacon. If there is not a deacon or other priest, the celebrating priest reads the Gospel.

The Place and Manner of Proclaiming the Readings

The readings are proclaimed from the lectern or pulpit, which should be situated in the Church in a fixed location that is elevated. It should be worthy of the dignity and nobility that the Word of God and the participation of the faithful demand. It is convenient that it be moderately adorned. In addition, because of its very nature, it should be used only for the readings, the responsorial psalm and the paschal proclamation. The homily and the prayer of the faithful can also be done at the lectern; on the other hand it is not advisable that other people go up to the lectern, such as, for example, the commentator or the cantor.

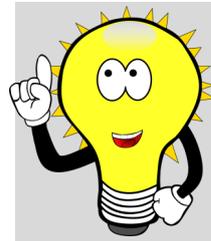
As to the proclamation of the readings, the lectors should do so in a loud and clear voice, knowing what they read. In other words, they

The liturgy of the Word is an integral part of sacramental celebrations. To nourish the faith of believers, the signs which accompany the Word of God should be emphasized: the book of the Word (a lectionary or a book of the Gospels), its veneration (procession, incense, candles), the place of its proclamation (lectern or ambo), its audible and intelligible reading, the minister's homily which extends its proclamation, and the responses of the assembly (acclamations, meditation psalms, litanies, and profession of faith).

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1154

should have a control over the contents and the techniques of communication.

The Second Vatican Council states, "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body." Indeed, the sacred Book is given at the lectern, as the symbol of Christ the Teacher's presence, the same signs of veneration that are conferred upon the Body of Christ on the altar. Thus, in the solemn celebration, if the altar is kissed, incensed and adorned with lights in honour of Christ, the Bread of Life, the lectionary at the lectern is also kissed, incensed and surrounded by lights, honouring Christ, the Word of Life. The Church thus confesses with expressive signs that Christ is there and that it is He who, through the priest or lectors, "speaks to us from Heaven." (Heb. 12:25)



The Old Testament readings do not follow a pattern through each book, but are placed in the lectionary to compliment and supplement the Gospel reading.

Responsorial Psalm is an extension of the Old Testament reading. It is part scripture reading, part sacred music (because preferentially the responsorial Psalm is to always be sung), and part prayer.

Praying with the Psalms is an ancient practice in the Church that goes all the way back to our Jewish roots. Today in our Catholic tradition you will find priests, religious, and the laity all around the world praying the liturgy of the hours, which is composed primarily from the Book of Psalms. If you were to travel to Israel, and visit the wailing wall, you'd find Jews praying these same Psalms, just as Jesus would've in His day.

The Second reading runs through each book, one at a time, and is untethered to the Gospel reading, unlike the First reading which is chosen for the lectionary to complement the Gospel reading.

The Gospel

The Gospel is the most sublime moment of the Liturgy of the Word. Before the faithful gathered together in the Eucharist, “Christ today announces His Gospel.” (SC 33). Twenty centuries later, we can listen to His word with the same reality with which they heard it years before in Palestine, although doubtlessly today we can hear it with more light and more help from the Holy Spirit. This moment, in itself, is very solemn and all the words and actions are full of great significance.

The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor: whether on the part of the minister appointed to proclaim it, who prepares himself by a blessing or prayer; or on the part of the faithful, who stand as they listen to it being read and through their acclamations acknowledge and confess Christ present and speaking to them; or by the very marks of reverence that are given to the Book of the Gospels.

GIRM 60.

“During the singing of the ‘Alleluia’ or other chant, if incense is being used, the priest puts some into the censer. Then with hands joined he bows before the altar and says softly the prayer, ‘Almighty God, cleanse my heart.’ If the Book of the Gospels is on the altar, he takes it and goes to the lectern, the servers, who may carry the censer and candles, walking ahead of him. At the lectern the priest opens the book and says: ‘The Lord be with you.’ Then he says: ‘A reading from’..., making the sign of the cross with his thumb on the book and on his forehead, mouth, and breast. If incense is used, he then incenses the book. After the acclamation of the people (Glory to you, Oh Lord), he proclaims the gospel and at the end kisses the book, saying softly: ‘May the words of the gospel wipe away our sins.’ After the reading the people make the acclamation customary to the region. (GIRM, 93-95)

The Church thus confesses with expressive signs that Christ is there and that it is He who, through the priest or lectors, “speaks to us from Heaven.” (Heb. 12:25)