

proper to the feast) and Our Lady of Sorrows, 15 September (where the Gospel only is proper). These are always biblical passages about the saint or the event in the saint's life that the Mass is celebrating. As will be seen from the Lectionary these proper readings are clearly indicated as such.

However most commonly the readings given for the saints are taken from the Common of Saints (see for example St. John Chrysostom, 13 September and St. Francis of Assisi, 4 October). It is clearly indicated in the Lectionary when this is the case. Habitual use of these readings would have the unfortunate effect of disrupting the normal weekday cycle. They should therefore only be used when there are compelling pastoral reasons. An example would be when the saint is a local patron, and his or her day is kept as a local Feast or Solemnity.

Resources

A range of resources can be downloaded from the Diocesan website (<http://www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy>). These resources offer guidance regarding

- further reading on the scriptures and their significance
- scripture prayer groups
- the ministry of the Word at Mass

Questions for reflection

1. How do I prepare myself for hearing the Word of God at Mass? Do I find that I am able to ponder that Word during Mass and in the days following?
2. What passages of scripture have had a particular impact on my understanding of God and his saving love?
3. Are there ways in which I can make the reading of Scripture a fruitful part of my daily prayer?

Westminster
LITURGY
Commission

The Bible and the Lectionary is one of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Commission to support the continuing formation of liturgical ministers in Westminster diocese. Other resources can be downloaded from www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy

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The Bible and the Lectionary

An introduction for Readers
and other ministers of the Word
in Westminster Diocese

The Bible

The Bible (from the Greek *biblia*, meaning books) is the collection of writings recognised by the Church as having been written under divine inspiration, and venerated as the 'Word of God'.

Two Testaments

This collection of books is divided into two parts.

The first, the Old Testament' includes 46 books. The second and shorter part is the New Testament, made up of 27 books. The Old Testament, scriptures which the Church receives from Judaism, speak of God's self-revelation to the patriarchs and to the people of Israel. The New Testament is formed from writings of the early Church. These writings testify to the life and teaching of Jesus, a new revelation of God in the 'Word made flesh', and the life and experience of the first Christian communities

At various time in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

Hebrews 1:1-2

The Old Testament

The Old Testament itself is organised into various sections:

- The Pentateuch (from the Greek, meaning five books) or Torah (from the Hebrew, meaning 'teaching')
- The Prophets - a collection of historical and prophetic writings
- The Writings - including the Psalms and the wisdom writings such as Job and Wisdom

The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant have never been revoked.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 121

The New Testament

The New Testament can be divided into two parts, the four gospels and other apostolic writings (including the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of St. Paul and other apostles, and the Book of Revelation

All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ, because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture

is fulfilled in Christ

Hugh of St. Victor, quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 134*

The Lectionary

The Lectionary is the selection of readings chosen by the Church for use at the celebration of Mass. The edition of the Lectionary most commonly in use in our Diocese is published in three volumes

- *Volume I* (Red) includes the readings for the Proper of Seasons and Sundays in Ordinary Time, together with the readings for Holy Days, Feasts of the Lord and Solemnities.
- *Volume II* (Blue) includes the readings for Weekdays in Ordinary Time and the Proper and Common of Saints
- *Volume III* (Brown) includes the readings for Ritual Celebrations (e.g. Baptism and Marriage), for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions (e.g. for the unity of Christians, For Prisoners); Votive Masses (e.g. of the Holy Eucharist or the Blessed Virgin Mary) and Masses for the Dead

Translation

The Lectionary most commonly used at Mass uses the *Jerusalem Bible* translation. Other translations approved for use include the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New Revised Standard Version*, and the *New Jerusalem Bible*.

The translation of the psalms most commonly used is the 1963 Grail translation, although the 1993 revised Grail translation is also approved for use.

Common Psalms

The Church encourages the singing of the psalm at Mass. To help communities sing the psalms a number of Common texts - responses and psalms - are provided in Volume I of the Lectionary. These may be used instead of the texts otherwise provided for particular days.

Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel acclamation is intended to be sung by everyone present. The verse may be sung by a cantor or choir (or even recited).

When there is only one reading before the Gospel (as for example occurs on a ferial weekday) the Alleluia or the verse before the Gospel may be omitted.

Weekday readings

Proper readings are given for certain celebrations of the saints. Examples include the readings provided for St. James, 25 July (where all readings are