

Understanding the Mass

The Lectionary

*Each week, we are explaining a different part of the Mass - the items that are used, the parts of the church, and the roles of the people who help us celebrate Mass. This week, our topic is **The Lectionary**.*

The **Lectionary** is a book of Readings for the Mass. The word lectionary comes from the Latin *legere*, meaning “chosen” or “read”. The Lectionary is treated as a sacred book because it contains the Word of God.



In the Jewish faith, there is a custom to read from the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) during prayer services. Jesus Himself read from the Torah and then taught others the meaning of what He had read.

The early Christians adopted this custom of reading from the Old Testament, and added the writings of the Apostles and Gospels. We continue these traditions today in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass.

There are different readings in the Lectionary for each day of the year. The readings are divided so that over the year we hear from all the books in the Bible.

There are readings for the days of the week (Monday through Saturday). On weekdays, there is a First Reading taken from either the Old Testament or the New Testament. Then there is a Responsorial Psalm. And there is the Gospel.



On Sundays and special feast days, there is a First Reading (often from the Old Testament), a Psalm, a Second Reading from the New Testament, and a reading from one of the Gospels. All these readings are found in the Lectionary.

In 2024, a new translation of the Lectionary was introduced in English. Known as the “English Standard Version”, this new version makes the translations more faithful to the original languages that the readings were written in: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

What readings did you hear read from the Lectionary at Mass today? _____

¹ *Our Parish Church*, Rev Jude Winkler (1993); *Our Lady Help of Christians Altar Servers' Handbook*