

Mass Parts 10/52: *Liturgy of the Word*



How do we pick the readings? There is a liturgical calendar set by the church. The Sunday readings are on a 3-year cycle, while the weekdays are on a 2-year cycle. Before the Council, it was the same readings each year. The call of the Council was to have more of the Scripture proclaimed at Mass. How then do we know which cycle we are in? Add up the digits of the current year. If you divide this by three, you know where we are at in the 3-year Sunday cycle. After dividing, if the remainder is 1, we are in Cycle A, so we will hear mostly (but not only) from Matthew's Gospel. If the remainder is 2, we are in Cycle B and will listen to a lot of Mark. If the year is evenly divided with no remainder, we are in Cycle C and hear from Luke. The Gospel of John is spread throughout the year. True, we are in the year 2018, but the liturgical year begins in Advent and is counted as part of the next year. So we are already in the 2019 liturgical year. Add up the digits: $2+1+9 = 12$ divided by $3 = 4$ with no remainder, so we are in Cycle C, we will hear a lot of Luke's Gospel throughout this coming year. For Weekdays, Year 1 is used for odd-numbered years and Year 2 for even. We are in the 2019 liturgical year, which is odd-numbered, so our weekday Mass readings are from Year 1.

How were the readings for each day picked at all? They started with the Gospels, to fit the seasons and feast days and to hear from most of it throughout the year. Then the First Reading and the Psalm were added from Scriptures that seemed to compliment the Gospel. The Second Reading is not normally related to the other readings, but is mostly from one of the Epistles of St. Paul.

An easy example was in November, on the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Gospel was Mark 12:38-44, which speaks of the widow's mite and her generosity in giving all to the Temple treasury. The First Reading should match the Gospel and reveal the theme for the whole celebration. This is also wonderful when preparing homilies. The First Reading that day was 1 Kings 17:10-16, which is the story of the Widow of Zarephath who gave her remaining food to the prophet Elijah. Because of her generosity, the flour in the jar and the oil in the jug never ran out while the famine in the land continued. The beginnings of the theme of God's care for those who are generous are just starting to become apparent. It is furthered by the Psalm, which was 146 that day. While the refrain of "Praise the Lord, my soul!" might not help, verse 9 praises God for: "The fatherless and the widow he sustains." And true to form, the Second Reading doesn't quite fit in. Hebrews 9:24-28 preaches of Christ as the high priest who enters the temple to offer the sacrifice for our atonement only once.

-Fr. Kopp

Next week: Preparing for the Liturgy of the Word