

# Mass Parts 11/52: ***Preparing for the Liturgy of the Word***



When we sit for the readings, many of us are guilty of zoning out. The readings fly by and we miss them. The intention to really pay attention can help, but there are other ways to enhance our listening as well as understanding of the readings.

A great practice is to actually do the readings beforehand. Some people normally don't hear everything said the first time. Other people need to follow along in a book with the reading as they hear it. We all have different learning styles and there are many ways to address this.

When I worked at a Catholic high school, I had lunch time prayer groups where we always looked at the following weekend's readings. Over time, the students commented on how the readings sounded more familiar and they were more attentive during the homily.

Where can we find the readings? Our bulletin always has the readings listed for every day of the next week. They can also be found on the U.S. Bishop's website: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org). Click the date you want on the calendar to the right on the main page. There are options to read the readings, listen to them read to you, and even watch video homilies for each day.

Beyond just reading, how can we study the Scriptures? Two good resources are found on the U.S. Bishop's website embedded within the readings, as well as in a good Catholic Study Bible. These are footnotes and cross references. The footnotes bring out historical context or hard-to-understand definitions and concepts. They also at times connect Catholic teaching. Cross references lead us to where similar concepts and teachings are found elsewhere in the Bible. More time on your hands or more desire to study? There are thousands of good Bible commentaries, dictionaries, and concordances that go into the furthest connections and teachings possible.

Both before and after the readings, there is also a way to pray with the readings. This is the ancient monastic practice of *Lectio divina*. The practice of "divine reading" is based on a slow and prayerful reading of the text. When a word or phrase in the reading stands out to you, stop and sit with it for a while in prayer. We can pray over each line, or each word, of the readings. We can carry these significant words or phrases with us throughout the day, making connections in prayer with our daily lives and memories.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Responses to the Readings