

Our current Lectionary (book of Scripture readings) for Mass was published in its current edition in 1981. A previous edition had been used since 1970.

The Lectionary, the Book of Gospels and the Sacramentary (book of Mass Prayers) are the three books we use for the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

The Sacramentary will be replaced by a new translation on the first Sunday of Advent, 2011 and from that point will be called the Roman Missal.

When Vatican Council II revised the ritual for Mass, they made a determined effort to open up the riches of Sacred Scripture to all Roman Catholics, and wanted to present most of the Bible in the course of a yearly cycle. This, of course, turned out to be impossible due to length.

Their effort resulted in our current system of a three-year cycle of Sunday readings and a two year cycle of weekly readings. So well done was this work that most mainline Protestant churches use the Roman Catholic Lectionary with some modifications.

Our Sunday cycle of readings focuses on the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Matthew is read in year A, Mark in year B and Luke in year C. An Old Testament reading is chosen to go with the Gospel reading, and a psalm or canticle is chosen to bridge the Old Testament reading and the Gospel. A second reading from the New Testament is also used. The Gospel of John is read during the Easter Season, and a reading from Acts of the Apostles replaces the Old Testament first reading.

Our weekday cycle is simpler, with the same Gospel reading for each individual weekday of the year and a first reading, either from the Old or New Testament, that alternates on a two-year cycle (year I and year II).

Careful attention to the Sunday readings will allow us to reflect on most of the Holy Bible in a three-year cycle. It is one of the great gifts of the reforms of Vatican II.