Proclaiming the Word of God

The Lectionary Cycle

Prayer before Study

O ineffable Creator, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all things, be pleased to cast a beam of your radiance upon the darkness of my mind.

Take from me the double darkness of sin and ignorance in which I was born. Give me quickness of understanding, a retentive memory, the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally, and abundant grace of expression.

Order the beginning, direct the progress and perfect the achievement of my work. You who are true God and true Man and who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Basic terms

- Lectionary
  - The book of readings used during Mass
  - Not a Bible, but it contains exclusively biblical readings
- Ambo
  - The lectern or podium from which readings are proclaimed
- Evangelarium
  - The Book of the Gospels
  - Contains only the Mass readings from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
  - Often an ornate book, signifying the importance of the Gospel readings
  - Typically carried in the entrance procession by the deacon

Basic terms

- Missal
  - The book containing all the various prayers used at Mass by the priest/deacon
  - The "big red book" used at the chair and the altar
  - The principal prayers for a particular Sunday are said during every Mass in every parish throughout the world
- Missalette
  - A smaller, often disposable paperback booklet containing the readings and prayers for Mass during a particular season
  - They typically also contain hymns

The Lectionary Cycle

- On a given Sunday or weekday, the same readings are proclaimed in every church throughout the world

- There is a three-year cycle for Sunday readings, meaning that the same readings we will hear this Sunday, the 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, we will hear again in three years on the same Sunday.

- There is a two-year cycle for weekday readings

- On some feast days of the Lord, the BVM or the Saints, there are set readings that are always read on that day.

Sunday readings

- Three-year cycle
- First Reading
  - Typically from the Old Testament
  - During the Easter Season, from Acts of the Apostles
- Psalm
  - Typically from the Book of Psalms, which was an ancient book of hymns
  - This is usually sung by a cantor and contains a response sung by the congregation after each stanza

Sunday readings

- Second Reading
  - Usually from one of the New Testament epistles

- Gospel Reading
  - From one of the four Gospels
  - Year A – Matthew
  - Year B – Mark/John
  - Year C – Luke

- Typically there is a similar theme between the 1st reading and the Gospel reading, sometimes all the readings

Weekday readings

- First reading
  - Two-year cycle (Old/New Testament)
- Psalm
- Gospel reading
  - One-year cycle (All four Gospels)

- So, the same Gospel reading is read each year on, say, Tuesday of the 31st week of Ordinary Time. The first reading and psalm will be the same every other year.

Feast Days

- Throughout the year, during all liturgical seasons, the Church celebrates various "feast" days of various rank or importance
  - Typically they relate to a particular Saint, the BVM or the Lord and are celebrated on a set calendar date each year.
  - Technically, these days may be classified as Memorials, Feasts or Solemnities, but they are all loosely called "feasts."
  - Depending on their rank, feast days might be skipped or moved

Feast day rankings

- Solemnities
  - Easter Sunday, Easter Week, Holy Triduum, Christmas, Mary Mother of God, Assumption, Immaculate Conception, Saint Joseph, <u>every Sunday</u>
- Feasts
  - Apostles, Evangelists, Mary Magdalene, Transfiguration, Triumph of the Cross
- Memorials
  - Most Saints
  - Some lesser-known Saints have "optional" memorials
- Ferial Days
  - No Saints, just a normal day

Feast Days

- March 17 – Memorial of St. Patrick

- October 4 – Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi

- August 15 – Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary

- October 18 – Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist

- October 22 – Optional Memorial of Pope St. John Paul II

- August 6 – Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

- December 25 – Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

- Etc....

- There are (many) more than 365 Saints, so a given day might have several Saints, though typically only the more well-known ones are celebrated universally

- The Mass celebrated on a particular feast day might have more or different readings, prayers, etc. depending on its rank

Feast Days

- A Saint's feast day is normally set on the day of his/her death, or if unknown, it is (somehow) assigned to a particular day

- If a Saint's feast day falls on a Sunday (or a higher-ranking day), it is usually skipped that year or possibly moved to the next day.
  - Example – Yesterday was Nov 1, the Solemnity of All Saints. Because of its higher rank, the readings and prayers for the 31st Sunday of OT were set aside.
  - Example – Today is All Souls' Day. Because of its rank, the usual readings for Monday of the 31st week of OT were set aside.
  - Example – October 18 is the Feast of St. Luke. It fell on a Sunday this year, so it was skipped.

Holy Days of Obligation

- Among the feast days, some are so important that the Church obliges us as the People of God to attend Mass
- These are called Holy Days of Obligation
  - Every Sunday
  - January 1 – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
  - Thursday, 6th week of Easter - Ascension of the Lord (typically transferred to the following Sunday)
  - August 15 – Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary
  - November 1 – Solemnity of All Saints
  - December 8 – Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary
  - December 25 – Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord
  - **If these days fall on a Saturday or Monday, the obligation is sometimes lifted for that year
- The Church in different countries will often have different Holy Days of Obligation

Vigil Masses

- Normally, the obligation to attend Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation is satisfied by attending Mass the night before

- This is usually exactly the same Mass, but it is called the Vigil Mass

- Examples:
  - Mass on Saturday evening (after 4 p.m.) satisfies the Sunday obligation
  - Mass on Christmas Eve, Halloween, New Year's Eve all satisfy the obligation to attend Mass on Christmas Day, All Saints Day and the Feast of Mary, Mother of God