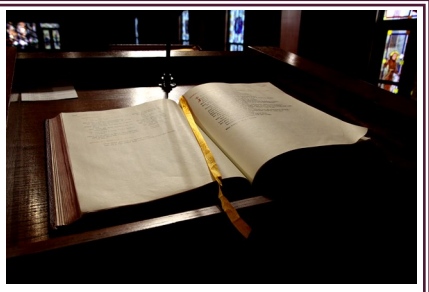
The Lectionary

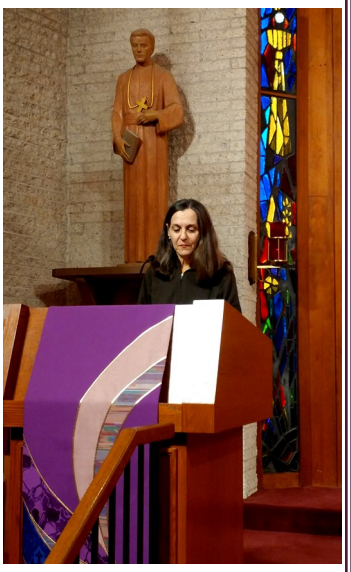




Do we read from the Bible at Mass?

At every Mass we hear from Scripture – at least two readings, one of which is always from the Gospels. On Sundays and solemnities there are three readings (the first reading, the second reading and the Gospel). With the addition of a psalm or canticle, this comprises the 'Liturgy of the Word'.

These readings are typically read from a Lectionary, not a Bible, though the Lectionary is taken from the Bible.



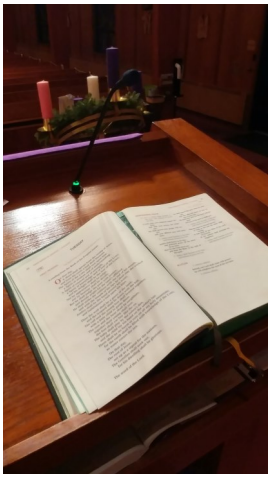
What's the difference?

A Lectionary is composed of the readings and the responsorial psalm assigned for each Mass of the year (Sundays, weekdays, and special occasions). The readings are divided by the day or the theme (baptism, marriage, vocations, etc.) rather than according to the books of the Bible. Introductions and conclusions have been added to each reading. The whole Bible is not included in the Lectionary as the readings are excerpts from the Bible (semi-continuous).

The Lectionary is arranged in two cycles, one for Sundays and one for weekdays.

The Sunday cycle is divided into three years, labeled A, B, and C. 2020 was Year A. 2021 is Year B, 2022 is Year C, etc.

- **In Year A,** we read mostly from the Gospel of Matthew.
- **In Year B,** we read the Gospel of Mark and chapter 6 of the Gospel of John.
- **In Year C,** we read the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is read during the Easter season in all three years.
- **The first reading,** usually from the Old Testament, reflects important themes from the Gospel reading.
- **The second reading** is usually from one of the epistles, a letter written to an early church community. These letters are read semi-continuously. Each Sunday, we pick up close to where we left off the Sunday before, though some passages are never read.



The weekday cycle is divided into two years, Year I and Year II. Year I is read in odd-numbered years (2021, 2023, etc.) and Year II is used in even-numbered years (2020, 2022, etc.) The Gospels for both years are the same. During the year, the Gospels are read semi-continuously, beginning with Mark, then moving on to Matthew and Luke. The Gospel of John is read during the Easter season. For Advent, Christmas, and Lent, readings are chosen that are appropriate to the season. The first reading on weekdays may be taken from the Old or the New Testament. Typically, a single book is read semi-continuously (i.e., some passages are not read) until it is finished and then a new book is started.

The year of the cycle changes on the First Sunday of Advent which is the beginning of the liturgical year. It is based on the New American Bible, which is the only English-language Lectionary that may be used at Mass in the dioceses of the United States (except for the current *Lectionary for Masses with Children).*

Source: USCCB.org