

**A BIBLICAL REFLECTION**  
**on the occasion of the**  
**Third Sunday of Lent**  
**11 March 2012**

**The Bible ⇔ The Lectionary**

The **Bible** is composed of 72 books, arranged from Genesis through Revelation. Catholics are encouraged to read the Bible, study the Bible, and allow the Bible to study them, their values and their actions. Each week in our parish, three different groups meet expressly for Bible Study; further, a number of other activities in our parish include biblical readings as part of their meetings.

The **Lectionary** is the book used at the pulpit during Mass. The Lectionary contains readings from the Bible selected and arranged so as to express and foster the liturgical life of the Church. If a Catholic comes to Mass each Sunday of the year, over the course of the three year Sunday Lectionary Cycle, that Catholic will have heard a great deal (but not all) of the Bible proclaimed during Mass.

**The Gospels Are Pre-eminent**

While each book of the Bible is inspired and sacred, not all biblical books are of equal weight. For us Catholics this should be rather obvious in that:

- 1) There is a separate and special **Book of the Gospels** that is carried in procession and placed on the altar.

- 2) In Mass only an ordained person may proclaim the Gospel.
- 3) The deacon is blessed before picking up the Book of the Gospels, or the priest prays for himself: "Cleanse my hearts and lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel"
- 4) We stand at attention for the Gospel proclamation
- 5) The Gospel has its own special sung introduction (The Gospel Acclamation)
- 6) There is a Greeting before its Proclamation ("The Lord be with you...")
- 7) After the Gospel has been announced, we sign our heads, lips and hearts while proclaiming, "Glory to you, O Lord")
- 8) At the conclusion of the Gospel Proclamation, we proclaim, "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!"
- 9) The ordained minister kisses the Gospel of the day.

### **Cycling Through the Gospels**

In the three year cycle of lectionary readings, the Gospels are arranged so that we hear mostly from one Gospel each year, that is, the Gospel According to: Matthew (Year A); Mark (Year B); and Luke (Year C). What about the Gospel

According to John? Well, **each year** from mid-Lent through Pentecost Sunday (about 10 weeks of the year) the Gospels are overwhelmingly from John, and especially so during the holiest three days of each year: the **Paschal Triduum**.

### **An Adjustment to Mark**

Since the **Gospel According to Mark** is so brief, our Lectionary supplements the Mark Sunday Cycle (Year B) with a number of Gospel readings from the fourth **Gospel According to John**:

- 1) Lent (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays)
- 2) Ordinary Time (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday; the 17<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup> Sundays)

### **Anti-Semitism & John's Gospel**

Of the **sixty-four** times St. John uses the term “the Jews” in his Gospel, **thirty-five** (55%) are neutral, **seven** (11%) are positive, and **twenty-two** (34%) are negative. As we begin the “Season of John” we need to admit that about one third of the time John refers to “the Jews” he is presenting them in a collective negative light. Since Anti-Semitism is a sin, what are we to make of this? I think we face it and remember that God speaks to us in Sacred Scripture, in Catholic Tradition, in the failures and sins of our past, in the questions of the present, in our hopes for the future, through others, and in our own hearts. It is important to keep the conversation alive. For more on our relations to the Jewish People check the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (paragraphs 60-64, 218-219, 597-599, 762, 839, 1611-1612).

## **A Meditation**

In St. Ann Chapel, near the Tabernacle, we have a stained glass window titled “Jacob & Wrestler” depicting the event in Genesis 22 when Jacob spends the night wrestling with God. At the end of the struggle, God changes our ancestor’s name from “Jacob” to “Israel”---a name meaning “one who has contended with God”. In John’s Gospel Jesus says of Nathaniel, “Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him” (John 1:47). To be a true son or daughter of Israel is to be, at times, a wrestler. After wrestling with God, Jacob/Israel walked the rest of his life with a limp; after wrestling with God, Jacob/Israel walked the rest of his life in the light.

