

## Pastor's Message

The Vatican II document entitled "The Constitution on Divine Revelation" states: *The Church has always venerated the divine scriptures as it has venerated the body of the Lord, in that it never ceases, above all in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the **word of God and the body of Christ** (my emphasis), (25).* Arguably the most visible and important change effected by the Second Vatican Council was the inclusion of a three year cycle of readings to enhance and enrich the first part of the Mass. The Council saw as one of its most important goals the reintroduction to the reading and studying of God's word in the Bible at Mass. And so each Sunday we have a first reading from the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible). These readings are chosen from either the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible), the prophets or the wisdom literature of the Jewish people. These are the books that Jesus would have known and studied and from which he understood himself and his mission.

We follow that reading with a psalm response. Psalms are the prayers, poems and songs written by people thousands of years ago and that still speak to the cries of us all for God's presence, love and mercy. Our second readings are taken from the letters (epistles) of the earliest disciples of Jesus as they struggle to form the community of the Church. Fascinatingly the issues of the early church continue to be issues with which we struggle today. The final reading every Sunday is from one of the Gospels. We read the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke on a three year cycle. (John's Gospel is read primarily in the Easter season.) All this so that we can begin to understand that God in Christ is present to us BOTH in God's holy word AND in the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus.

Our Mass makes God present to us in word and in sacrament, in the readings and in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the chalice. You may wonder how we ever got away from reading and studying the Bible as Catholics when it was so essential to our early church communities. You can blame the Protestant reformation. Martin Luther and the reformers built their reform on studying the Bible and seeing where their church, the Catholic church, had wandered from God's word. So the Catholic response was to counter the Protestant reformers by telling Catholics to leave the interpretation of the Bible to the priests, bishops and popes. And so the revised Mass from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) emphasized the body and blood of Christ (the sacrament) over the presence of God in God's word. Protestant worship focused on the word of God, Catholic worship focused on the sacrament (body and blood) of Christ. Thankfully the Second Vatican Council reunited God's word and the sacrament in our worship at Mass.

As the "Constitution of Divine Revelation" said: *we partake of the bread of life...from the one table of the word of God and the body of Christ.*

Fr. Chris