

LITURGICAL CYCLES

The start of a new liturgical year, beginning with the first Sunday of Advent, also marks the transition from one lectionary cycle (A, B, or C) to the next. These cycles are a result of the Second Vatican Council, which ordered a change in the Sunday readings at Mass so that Catholics would become more familiar with the text of the Bible. As a result we now have a three-year cycle of readings built around readings from the three synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

*[The [Gospels of Matthew](#), [Mark](#), and [Luke](#) are referred to specifically as the **Synoptic Gospels** because they include many of the same stories, often in the same sequence, and similar wording.]*

Cycle A Resources: The Gospel of Matthew

In the Year A (2011, 2014, etc.) in the Catholic Church's lectionary of Scripture readings for Mass, the Gospel passage almost every Sunday is taken from St. Matthew.

In the New Testament we meet St. Matthew only indirectly through the Gospel that bears his name. Matthew's Gospel is one of the longest books in the New Testament and has exercised great influence in Christian life over the centuries. It has even been called the most important book ever written.

Cycle B Resources: The Gospel of Mark

In the Year B (2012, 2015, etc.) in the Catholic Church's lectionary of Scripture readings for Mass, the Gospel of St. Mark is featured prominently.

Mark's Gospel is now generally regarded as the earliest Gospel. It presents a stark and challenging portrait of Jesus' public ministry, which leads into a dramatic account of his passion and death. It has often been described as a passion narrative with a long introduction. Mark presents Jesus as a wise teacher and a powerful and compassionate healer. But he also insists that this Jesus can be properly understood only when we confront the mystery of the cross and Jesus' identity as a suffering Messiah. For this reason Mark's work is sometimes called the Gospel of Suffering. As we study and pray through this text, we will have to face the suffering of Jesus the Son of God and the suffering that is part of our lives as individuals and as citizens of the world.

Cycle C Resources – The Gospel of Luke

In the Year C (2010, 2013, etc.) of the Catholic Church's lectionary of Scripture readings for Mass, the Gospel passage almost every Sunday is taken from St. Luke. In the New Testament we meet the person we call St. Luke only indirectly. We do so primarily through the two books that

have traditionally been ascribed to him: the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. These two writings are among the longest and most influential books in the New Testament. Indeed, what we call Luke's Gospel is sometimes described as the most beautiful book ever written.