

Understanding the Mass: The First Reading

In his book, “A Biblical Walk through the Mass,” Edward Sri, writes, “the first reading is usually, from the Old Testament (except during the Easter Season, when it is from Acts of the Apostles, following the ancient practice).”¹ The Old Testament,

or the Hebrew
the Prophets, the
Hebrew people
and the Psalms
and praying.



Scriptures are the Law, the teachings of wisdom literature, narratives of the and their customs and worship rituals, and songs that Jesus grew up learning. Moreover, “one cannot understand New Testament Scriptures without

knowing the story of Israel in the Old.”² Many scholars and the Church conclude that New Testament Narratives of Jesus fulfill or bring to conclusion the narratives of God’s revelation to man in the Old Testament. For example,

As Vatican II taught, echoing St. Augustine, ‘God brought it about that the New should be hidden in the Old and that the Old should be manifest in the New. For although Christ founded the New Covenant in his blood...still the books of the Old Testament, all of them caught up in the Gospel message, attain and show forth their meaning in the New Testament...and in turn shed their light on it and explain it.’³

Generally, but not always, the first reading from the Old Testament “corresponds to the Gospel reading for the day. Sometimes the correspondence is thematic, illustrating continuity or contrast between the Old Testament story and the Gospel.”⁴

Remember, the Word of God is God speaking to us especially in the context of the Liturgy. In his book, “What Happens at Mass,” Fr. Jeremy Driscoll O.S.B, explains the event character of the Word of God as opposed to the words we use in conversation. Fr. Driscoll writes, “The Word of God is an event: the event of creation and the *event* of what God is doing and saying in Israel and finally the *event* of

¹ A biblical walk through the Mass, Edward Sri, Ascension Press 2010 Pg. 58


² Ibid Pg. 58

³ Ibid Pg. 59 (From Dei Verbum Par. 16)

⁴ Ibid Pg. 59

what God is saying and doing in Jesus. The words of the Bible narrate the event. They are a precious means to us, for they are given by the Holy Spirit...In the proclamation of these words, the event proclaimed becomes present.”⁵ The Old Testament Scriptures; are a

...vast collection of theological traditions developed during well over a thousand years. Yet, despite the differences of the many human circumstances and authors that are reflected there, it is not difficult for the one who reads with faith to see that the collection as a whole leads to a center. Everything is organized around the Exodus, the wandering in the desert, the coming into the



either lead to that, that. The whole of in what God these events. Every remembered and

Promised Land. All things recount that, or look back to revelation for Israel is focused manifested in himself to be in subsequent generation celebrated them, defined their present dealings with God in reference to them. Jesus, as a Jewish man, would have done the same. These events, then, become directly part of who he is. He expresses himself in terms of them. This is especially true of the days leading up to his Death and culminating in it.

For us today in the Liturgy;

“When a passage from this collection is read at Mass, now in virtue of Jesus Resurrection, that original event becomes the event of the community that hears it. The Christian community hears it with the insight of the risen Lord. What happens at Mass in this moment was expressed already in the Gospel of Luke where the story of the risen Lord’s appearance to the two disciples along the road to Emmaus is recounted. “How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures” (Luke 22:25-27). Or again, “Jesus said, ‘everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms

⁵ What Happens at Mass, Driscoll Jeremy, LTP 2011 Pg. 33

must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day” (Luke 24:44-46).⁶ Ultimately, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, through the working of the Holy Spirit, “The Word penetrates minds and hearts of all who are present and mysteriously begins to shape each and all together into this pattern of suffering and glory. But we must actively listen to the Word and ourselves search for the connection.”⁷

The conclusion of the first reading is profound. “At the end of the proclamation of the passage, the reader bluntly declares what it is that we have heard: ‘The Word of the Lord,’ and...we cry out from the depths of our hearts, ‘Thanks be to God.’”⁸

⁶ Ibid Pg. 37

⁷ Ibid Pg. 38

⁸ Ibid Pg. 39

Photo Sources

The Word of God Lives Pg. 1

https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://gogod101.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/00-end-time-bible-prophecy-word-of-god-is-alive.jpg&imgrefurl=https://gogod101.wordpress.com/&h=300&w=300&tbid=b8rqQCGvvOEZxM:&docid=SC1XPK_hFiSn1M&ei=9deXVsegNMnYjwPG5YfwDw&tbn=isch&client=safari&ved=0ahUKEwiH76yY56nKAhVJ7GMKHcbyAf4QMwggwKBMwEw

The Exodus Pg. 2

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