



LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

The Themes of the Lectionary

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ONE OF THE GREATEST ASSETS of the Church is the lectionary. This is not always self-evident, however. Day after day and week after week, the Church reads assigned portions of the Holy Scriptures known as lections. These lections cause us to experience the life of Our Lord, since they are the inspired words of divine revelation. They also make clear to us the dogmas and doctrines of Christ's most holy religion. Furthermore, the lectionary unites Christians one to another in a way that transcends both time and space; it does so by placing us in a linear tradition of common prayer and worship with the whole people of God.

The tradition of using an established lectionary for the public reading of the Scriptures is a very ancient practice, one that predates even Christianity itself. When we read from the lectionary, we follow in the steps of our forefathers. The use of the lectionary is so ancient that it

even links us to the worship practices of the faithful people of God who lived centuries before the Incarnation of Our Lord.

From the texts of Holy Scripture, we learn that the use of a lectionary was practiced in the synagogue and temple worship of the Jewish people. Jesus himself even read the Scriptures from a lectionary, as we are told in Luke 4:17, 20-21: "And there [in the synagogue] was delivered unto him [Jesus] the book of the prophet Esaias...And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'" In the above text from Saint Luke's Gospel, Jesus receives the appointed text to be read on that day of worship, reads it, and teaches the people through preaching on the same. This pattern is still followed today by our ministers who first discern which text is to be read from the lectionary, read the assigned text in the presence of the people, and then proceed to preach upon the teachings of the same.