

# Understanding the Mass

## Part 10 in a series

**The Liturgy of the Word – continued** (Note: All scripture references are from the *New American Bible [NAB]*, copyright 1970, 1986, 1991 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine [CCD], Washington DC.)

We have just heard from the Old Testament while listening attentively for the connection we will hear in the Gospel reading. We “respond” by singing a Psalm which also echoes the theme of the scripture we just heard.

### A short side-bar about the Psalms

Keep in mind, the Psalms are more than just a collection of poems, prayers and hymns. Many of them are indeed prophecies that were fulfilled by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. A good example of this is Psalm 22, written by David, the great king of Israel. The opening words are found on the lips of the crucified Jesus; “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” When we read these words in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion (Mark 15: 34 and Matthew 27:46) we quickly come to realize that he is quoting from the Psalms. (Homework! Several other verses of Psalms 22 are either quoted or alluded to by Matthew, Mark and John in the accounts of Jesus’ passion. Read Matthew 27:35 and 43 and John 19:24 and then see if you can find the reference in Psalms 22.)

The Psalms are also in integral part of the *Liturgy of the Hours* or what is known as the prayer of the Church. Every day, at every hour, somewhere in the world the Psalms are being prayed by faithful Christians. (Homework! – Google *Liturgy of the Hours* and read about this beautiful devotion)

### The second reading

The second reading is always taken from the New Testament, specifically from one of the letters written to different local churches that were founded in the early years after Jesus’ resurrection. In addition, we will occasionally read from the book of Revelation, which is not technically a letter but what is known as *apocalyptic* literature. (Homework! Look up the definition of apocalyptic literature and see how it applies to John’s *The Book of Revelation*.)

Most of the Letters were written by St. Paul, but others were written by other Apostles of Christ or by other disciples.

These readings are usually from the same Letter for several Sundays in a row and in most cases they are continuous or semi-continuous. For instance, the second reading for next Sunday (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter, year B) is read from 1 John 2:1-5a; the next week it is 1 John 3:1-2 and the next is 1 John 3: 18-24. We stay in 1 John all the way to Pentecost Sunday. The various readings change as we go through the three year cycle. This allows us to be exposed to as many of the New Testament letters as possible. The second reading should inspire us to pick up our Bibles and dig a little deeper in the letter being read. We should seek to see how the writings apply to our everyday lives, just as they were intended to apply to the lives of the people in the early Christian churches for which they were written.