

Joint Lectionary Project

Progress Report — December 2025

Introduction

The Bishops' Conferences of Australia, Ireland and New Zealand are working together on a new edition of the Lectionary. The Lectionary contains the readings for Masses for Sundays, Weekdays, celebrations of the Saints and Sacraments, and Masses for the Dead. The new edition is based on the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* and the *Abbey Psalms and Canticles*.

The Text

The *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* (RNJB) was chosen by all 3 Conferences after consultation. It is a revision of the *Jerusalem Bible*, which is the text currently used in the Lectionary, and so there is a continuity with what we currently hear and a degree of familiarity. The text has been revised in the light of 3 principles. The first is formal equivalence – this means that the translator takes account of every word in the original Hebrew or Greek text and seeks to express the language and imagery more faithfully in English. The second is inclusive language. This is an issue which was raised in the consultation – that the language used in the translation shows that the message of the Bible is directed to women and men equally. The final principle is proclamation. The Bible was written to be proclaimed aloud and for many Catholics today their primary experience of the Bible will be hearing it proclaimed at Mass – therefore it is important the text both reads well but can also be heard intelligibly.

The *Abbey Psalms and Canticles* is a revision of the *Grail Psalter*, which is the text used for the Responsorial Psalms in the current Lectionary. So, again, there is continuity and familiarity. This is a translation of the Psalms which has been accepted across the English-speaking world. The principles of revision are similar to the RNJB: a desire for greater accuracy, an awareness of inclusive language and an attention to the need for the text to be sung.

The Process

Work on the new Lectionary began in late 2024. Bishops and their advisors receive a section of the text every couple of weeks for review and comment. These comments are reviewed by a Working Group which has members appointed by 3 Conferences, who have skills and expertise in liturgy and scripture.

The Lectionary will be in 4 volumes: 1 – Sundays, 2 & 3 – Weekdays and Saints, 4 – Sacraments, Funerals and other Masses. The text of Volume 1 was completed in July and it was received at the recent plenary meetings of the Bishops' Conferences. This report is a consequence of these meetings – to let the wider Church know about the progress of this project.

Work is currently being done on the Weekday volumes and this is due to be completed next May (2026). Sections of the final volume will be sent out in September– November next year. Once the text has been reviewed and any amendments made across the 4

volumes it will be presented to Bishops' Conferences for approval – this is likely to be in the first quarter of 2027. The approved text will then be sent to the Holy See for *confirmatio* – where the text is reviewed by the Dicastery for Divine Worship. Once *confirmatio* has been received work can begin on preparing the text for publication. The Joint Lectionary Project Commission has appointed a publisher for the ritual edition of the Lectionary – Hodder and Stoughton. The Lectionary will be available in 2 sizes and there will be a Book of the Gospels. It takes about 18 months for a text of this size to be prepared for publication and printed. At the same time there will be work with other publishers, as well as composers, who will wish to use the new Lectionary text in their publications. The date of the first use of the new Lectionary will probably be the First Sunday of Advent – to begin the new liturgical year with the new text – but as not every element in the timeline can be estimated we cannot be quite certain of the date.

In preparation for the publication and first use of the new Lectionary there will also be opportunities for liturgical and biblical formation.

Some notes on the text

Though the final design of the Lectionary will be different to what follows, many of the elements of the layout will remain. It is over 50 years since the current Lectionary was published. It has been possible to learn from what other countries have done in presenting the text of the readings. These include:

- Use of two colours – only the text in black is proclaimed.
- Sense lines – this is encouraged by the Introduction to the Lectionary. It helps the reader to understand and proclaim the reading.
- LORD – this follows common usage in biblical translations. The use of small caps for LORD or GOD indicates that in the Hebrew source text the Divine Name for God has been used. It is a sign of respect for the Jewish heritage of the text.

What can be done in preparation?

Consider some of the following ideas.

- Get a copy of the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* to become familiar with the new translation. Make the text available to others.
- Review the Introduction to the Lectionary – it provides a brief theological description of the Word in the Liturgy, practical guidance on the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, and an overview of the contents of the Lectionary.
- *Preparing for the New Lectionary*, edited by Neil Xavier O'Donoghue and published by [St Pauls, Ireland](#)
- Celebrate the Sunday of the Word of God – Pope Francis's document introducing the Sunday has ideas about how it might be celebrated – *Aperuit Illis*.
 - (The Sunday is celebrated on the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time in Ireland and New Zealand and on the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time in Australia.)
- The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word is intended to enable the reception of the Word of God by those who are listening. Review how you celebrate and see if there are opportunities to develop good practice.
- Look ahead and budget – it is hoped that the price for the Lectionary will be reasonable for a well-produced set of books which will last perhaps 50 years. Some communities and schools will wish to set aside funds over the next 3-4 years.
- Offer formation and spiritual opportunities for all who minister the word.

67 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading

Isaiah 8:23b–9:3

'In the territory of the nations the people have seen a great light.'

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

- 23 As in the past
he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
so in the future he will glorify the Way of the Sea,
beyond the Jordan, the territory of the nations.
- 9:1 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on the inhabitants of a country in shadow dark as death,
light has blazed forth.
- 2 You have enlarged the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest time,
as they exult when they are dividing plunder.
- 3 For the yoke that weighed on them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
these you have broken as on the day of Midian.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14. R: 1a

- R: The LORD is my light and my salvation.
- 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
whom should I dread? R:
- 4 There is one thing I ask of the LORD,
only this do I seek:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD,
to enquire at his temple. R:

- 13 I believe I shall see the LORD's goodness
in the land of the living.
- 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong;
be stout-hearted, and wait for the LORD! *Rx*

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17-18

'I urge you all to be in agreement. There should be no divisions among yourselves.'

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

- 10 Brothers and sisters,
I urge you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
all to be in agreement.
There should be no divisions among yourselves,
so that you are united in your beliefs and judgements.
- 11 For it has been made clear to me by Chloe's people about you,
brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you.
- 12 What I mean is that every one of you is saying,
'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,'
or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.'
- 13 Has Christ been split up?
Was Paul crucified for you,
or were you baptised in Paul's name?
- 17 After all, Christ sent me not to baptise,
but to proclaim the gospel,
and not by wisdom of language,
which would make the cross of Christ pointless.
- 18 The message of the cross is folly
to those who are on the way to ruin,
but for those of us who are on the way to salvation
it is the power of God.
- The word of the Lord.

Acclamation before the Gospel

Cf. Matthew 4:23

Alleluia, alleluia.
Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom
and cured all kinds of illness among the people.
Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 4:12–23

'Jesus went to Capernaum, this was to fulfil what was spoken by Isaiah.'

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

12 Hearing that John had been arrested
Jesus withdrew to Galilee,
13 and leaving Nazara he went and settled in Capernaum,
beside the lake, on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali.
14 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:
15 Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!
Way of the sea beyond Jordan.
Galilee of the nations!
16 The people that sat in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a country and shadow of death
a light has dawned.

17 From then onwards
Jesus began his proclamation with the message,
'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.'

18 As he was walking by the Lake of Galilee
he saw two brothers,
Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother;
they were making a cast into the lake with their net,
for they were fishermen.
19 And he said to them,
'Come after me and I will make you fishers of people.'
20 And at once they left their nets and followed him.
21 Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers,
James son of Zebedee and his brother John;
they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets,
and he called them.
22 And at once, leaving the boat and their father,
they followed him.

23 He went round the whole of Galilee
teaching in their synagogues,
proclaiming the good news of the kingdom
and curing all kinds of disease and illness among the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Gospel

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- 17 From then onwards
Jesus began his proclamation with the message,
'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.'
- The Gospel of the Lord.

73 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading

Isaiah 58:6-10

'Your light will blaze out like the dawn'

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord:

- 6 Is not this the sort of fast that I favour:
to open unjust fetters,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free
and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not sharing your food with the hungry,
bringing into your house the homeless poor,
clothing one you see to lack clothing,
not drawing back from your own kin?

8 Then your light will blaze out like the dawn
and your wound will quickly be healed.
Saving justice will go ahead of you
and the glory of the LORD come behind you.
9 Then you will call to the LORD and he will answer;
you will cry and he will say, 'I am here'.
If you banish the yoke from among you,
the pointed finger and malicious gossip,
10 if you share what you have with the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the deprived,
your light will rise in the darkness
and your darkest hour will be like noon.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 112:4-5. 6-7. 8a, 9. *R.* 4a

R. A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

or: Alleluia.

4 A light rises in the darkness for the upright;
he is generous, merciful and just.
5 It goes well for the man who deals generously and lends,
who conducts his affairs with justice. *R.*
6 He will never be moved;
for ever shall the upright be remembered.
7 He has no fear of evil news;
with a firm heart, he trusts in the LORD. *R.*
8 With a steadfast heart he will not fear.
9 Open-handed, he gives to the poor;
his justice stands firm for ever.
His might shall be exalted in glory. *R.*

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

I announced to you the mystery of Christ crucified.

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters,
I did not come announcing the mystery of God
by any brilliance of oratory or wisdom.
2 I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have among you
was knowledge of Jesus, and of him crucified.
3 I came among you in weakness,
in fear and great trembling,

4 and my speech and my proclamation were not
in the persuasive words of wisdom
but in the demonstration of spirit and power,
5 so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom
but on the power of God.

The word of the Lord.

Acclamation before the Gospel

John 8:12

Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
anyone who follows me will have the light of life.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-16

'You are the light of the world.'

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples,

13 'You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again?

It is no longer good for anything,

and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot.

14 You are the light of the world.

A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden.

15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a tub;

they put it on the lamp-stand

where it shines for everyone in the house.

16 In the same way your light must shine for people,

so that they may see your good works

and give praise to your Father in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord.