

April 15, 2018

Last week we considered how the readings during the Liturgy of the Word are chosen. We saw that in choosing the actual readings, two principles are used: the principle of harmony and the principle of semi-continuous reading. This week we will consider some examples to help us understand this better.

The principle of harmony means the readings are chosen to be harmony with the season of the year. So now that we are in the season of Easter we see the Gospel readings for the first three Sundays (April 1, 8, and 15) tell us about the resurrection. On April 22 we see Christ as the Good Shepherd and the in the remaining Sundays we listen to the last discourse of Jesus before he died from the Gospel according to John. The first reading each week is from the New Testament book of the Acts of the Apostles. In these readings we hear of the life, witness, and growth of the early Church formed by the apostles' preaching after the resurrection. The second reading is from the first letter of John because "these are texts that seem to fit in especially well with the spirit of joyous faith and sure hope proper to this season" (Lectionary for Mass: Introduction, #100).

The principle of semi-continuous reading is when a particular book from the Bible is chosen and parts of it are read over a period of several weeks. We see this principle in our Easter season readings since the first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles each week and the second reading is from the first letter of John.

When we move back to the season of Ordinary Time on June 10, we will see another example of the principle of semi-continuous reading. The second reading will be from second letter of Paul to the Corinthians for 5 weeks. Then we will read from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians for 7 weeks. After that we will move to the letter of James (5 weeks) and the letter to the Hebrews (7 weeks). During Ordinary Time we will also read each week from the Gospel according to Mark except for a few weeks starting July 29 when we will read from chapter 6 of the Gospel according to John.

Another example of the principle of harmony is found in the season of Ordinary Time. This is when a reading is chosen to be in harmony with another reading. The first reading from the Old Testament is chosen to be in harmony with the Gospel reading meaning we can find some relationship between the two readings. For example on June 10, the first reading is from the book of Genesis telling the story of how the serpent (the devil) tempted Adam and Eve and how they gave into this temptation. Satan seems to be victorious but in the Gospel we see Jesus as victorious over Satan. On June 17, we see how a tender shoot is planted and becomes a majestic cedar (first reading from the prophet Ezekiel) and how the mustard seed which is smallest of seeds grows into the largest of all plants (Gospel). This tells us something about the Kingdom of God and how it continues to grow.