

# Re-visioning the Lectionary Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures for Lent, Good Friday and the Easter Season

J. Frank Henderson

Frank Henderson's Site on Liturgy and Medieval Women  
<http://www.compumart.ab.ca/fhenders>

© J. Frank Henderson 2002

## Contents

Introduction  
Selection of Alternative or Novel Readings  
Proposed Readings  
Notes

## Introduction

In this paper I raise questions regarding ways in which the Hebrew Scriptures are used in the Roman Lectionary and propose alternative readings for consideration.<sup>1</sup>

A church's appreciation of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is expressed in part through its understanding of the relationship between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures, and in the ways it uses the Hebrew Scriptures in worship. In this regard the Roman Catholic bishops of the United States have set forth the following principle:

Scholarly studies and educational efforts should be undertaken to show the common historical, biblical, doctrinal and liturgical heritage shared by Catholics and Jews, as well as their differences. This includes not only *appreciation of the Hebrew Scriptures as a source of faith with their own perpetual value*, but also a recognition of Judaism as a living tradition that has a strong and creative religious life through the centuries since the birth of Christianity from the common root.<sup>2</sup>

I understand "source of faith with their own perpetual value" along the following lines.<sup>3</sup>

First, Christians today accept and appreciate that the human author of the biblical text was communicating a message of faith to God's people in the writer's own time and place. Thus the text was originally written for and had meaning for the Hebrew people.

In addition, the biblical text has continued to have value as a message of faith over the centuries and still today. God is consistent and continues to act across time as God acted in the past; God's redemptive purpose has a unity. The present understanding of the message of faith, of course, may have developed and grown in comparison with its original meaning. This is the natural result of centuries of reflection, interpretation and living in different times and circumstances. The continuing "perpetual value" of the faith-message applies (in general) to the Jewish people as well as to Christians.<sup>4</sup> In the Jewish context this development includes the Talmud, rabbinic Judaism and more recently the emergence of other branches of Judaism. Similarly there has been development within Christianity.

While the Hebrew Scriptures have thus a certain degree of independence vis-a-vis the Christian Scriptures, their relationship may also be described as a kind of dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. Thus Christians read the Hebrew Scriptures' message of faith also through Christian eyes, seeing that in God's consistency God acted the same way in Jesus as had been done in the past. Therefore "in the Christian community it is proper to regard Scripture as a whole in a christological perspective, but this does not mean forcing particular texts to bear witness to Jesus Christ or to carry a Christian meaning."<sup>5</sup>

How well does the present Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* show an "appreciation of the Hebrew Scriptures as a source of faith with their own perpetual value"?<sup>6</sup> Here I wish to consider only three sets of readings, those for the Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent, those for Passion Sunday and Good Friday, and those for the Sundays of the Easter Season.

Easter is a high point in the Christian liturgical year, and is celebrated in the first place over the course of the three-day Paschal Triduum or Great Three Days of Easter that include Good Friday. Lent is a period of preparation for Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday and including six Sundays. The celebration of Easter is extended and prolonged in the Easter season, where there are eight Sundays including Easter Sunday and Pentecost.

## **Easter Season**

During the Easter season the Lectionary does not use the Hebrew Scriptures at all. The Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* simply tells us "The first reading is from Acts, which throughout the Easter season replaces the Old Testament readings."<sup>7</sup> A benign interpretation of this omission might be that it is merely a practical matter, needing to make room in the three-reading lectionary system for the Acts of the Apostles (first reading), while also using readings from 1 John, 1 Peter and the book of Revelation (second reading); the third reading is from the gospels..

At another level, however, the decision to omit Hebrew Scripture readings might give the impression (a) that it is not appropriate to use the Hebrew Scriptures during the Easter season, and/or (b) that appropriate readings from the Hebrew Scriptures do not exist or cannot be found. Further, this omission might be interpreted as deliberately communicating a message that in the experience of Easter -- the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ -- Christianity and the Christian Scriptures have replaced Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures.

## **Lent**

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures are used on Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent, and the Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* states the principle on which they were chosen.

The Old Testament readings are about the history of salvation, which is one of the themes proper to the catechesis of Lent. The series of texts for each Year presents the main elements of salvation history from its beginning until the promise of the New Covenant.<sup>8</sup>

This principle shows a high regard for the Hebrew Scriptures, uses them in a way that is independent of individual gospel passages, and says that they are important for the education and formation of those preparing for baptism and those preparing to renew their baptism at Easter.

However, “salvation history” can be understood in more than one way. This concept can be understood as implying (a) that the Hebrew Scriptures are valued because they represent preparation for Jesus Christ and Christianity, or (b) that they are of value *only inasmuch* they are such preparation. The latter meaning would seem to be inconsistent – or not fully respectful – with the Hebrew Scriptures as “a source of faith with their own perpetual value.” The statement from the Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* quoted above can be interpreted as favoring the second view. In addition, salvation history is only one approach to the interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, though it was a dominant view at the time the Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* was prepared.

## **Passion Sunday and Good Friday**

The Hebrew Scripture readings for Passion Sunday and Good Friday are “suffering servant” passages (Isaiah 50:4-7 for Passion Sunday and Isaiah 52:13–53:12 for Good Friday.)<sup>9</sup> The Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* says:

On Good Friday the liturgical service has as its center John’s narrative of the passion of him who was portrayed as the Servant of Yahweh and also became the one High Priest by offering himself to the Father.<sup>10</sup>

A respectful way to view the suffering servant passages would be to first recognize that there was an original suffering servant — whether an individual or corporate remnant — who lived at the time of the exile in Babylon and had to do with Israel’s hope of restoration. It is then appropriate also to appreciate that “because God is consistent, divine grace could work “in similar ways in the time of Judea’s exile under Rome — and hence in the life of Jesus — at it had done in the time of Second Isaiah’s exile in Babylon.”<sup>11</sup>

Some Christians, however, see the suffering servant passages as clear predictions of Jesus. In this view the author “was inspired to see what was centuries away. The passion fulfills the prophecy, and essentially we need not worry about whatever. . . meaning this passage might have had contemporaneous with its author.”<sup>12</sup>

This appreciation at the very least is not discouraged by the statement from the Introduction of the *Lectionary for Mass* quoted above. It also appears to be supported by well-known liturgical commentaries, for example that by Adrian Nocent:

The exegetes do not agree on the identity of the servant described by Isaiah. Some believe it to be the prophet itself; others think Israel is meant . . . .

In any case, when the Church reads this text, we see in it a moving description of the Christian who is laid low and accepts death as an expiatory sacrifice that will bring life to the nation. From our standpoint as Christians, the interpretation of this text by the new Testament is decisive: the Servant is Christ. We admit that by the rules of exegesis the servant may be interpreted as being either an individual or a people. Yet it is impossible for us to hear the passion read on Good Friday and not see in it the image of him whose victorious death the Church is celebrating.<sup>13</sup>

I suggest that long centuries of Christian application of the suffering servant passages to Jesus have marked these to such an extent that many Christians regard these sections of Isaiah as if they were part of the Christian Scriptures

### **Selection of Alternative or Novel Readings**

The analysis above raises critical questions about certain uses and omission of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Roman Lectionary. I now propose alternative readings from the Hebrew Scriptures for Lent, for Passion Sunday and Good Friday, and novel readings for the Easter Season. These are intended to be more faithful to the principle that the Hebrew Scriptures are “source of faith with their own perpetual value” than are the present readings.

The choice of alternative readings involves two steps, which go together in dialogical fashion. One step is to choose passages that make sense on their own account, outside of the

context of the Christian liturgical year. These are accepted as messages of faith, both in their original context and through centuries of reflection and interpretation.

The other step is to choose passages that also have meaning for Christians within the context of the liturgies of Lent, Good Friday and the Easter Season.

In this process some of the present lectionary readings are still used, though now usually on a different Sunday and in a new context.

It must be admitted that this approach is easier to apply to the liturgical “seasons” (Lent and Easter, but also Advent and Christmastide) than for the other half (roughly) of the liturgical year (called Ordinary Time by Roman Catholics). All three readings for each Sunday are chosen to relate to and express the theology of the season; the season itself is the primary determining factor. In contrast, during Ordinary Time the Hebrew Scriptures reading for each Sunday is chosen to “harmonize” with the gospel reading; the gospel is the primary determining factor. (The second reading, however, is independent of the gospel).<sup>14</sup>

### **Lent and the Easter Season**

I take the position that the lectionary readings for these seasons should speak to the way Christian people live their daily lives – as individuals and as church. I refer to this as “baptismal living.”

My starting place is this: To celebrate Easter is to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the paschal mystery. It is also to celebrate the experience and mystery of baptism (Christian initiation), through which Christians enter into that paschal mystery. It extends as well to the living out of the paschal mystery and of baptism in the daily lives of Christians.

Lent is a period of preparation for the celebration of Easter; this implies and includes preparation for baptism. Catechumens are in the last stages of their preparation for baptism. Those already baptized help the catechumens move toward baptism; in addition they themselves are preparing to renew their baptismal commitment at Easter. The baptized accompany, encourage and pray for the catechumens; furthermore, they demonstrate the meaning and consequences of baptism by the example of their daily living.

Lectionary readings for Lent and the Easter season need consistently and effectively to express the meaning of “baptismal living.” This reflects a renewed relationship with God, with self, with other persons, and with the rest of creation. With this in mind, passages from the Hebrew Scripture have been selected that speak to the lives of God’s people – originally the lives of the Hebrew people of old, in a continuing way (at least potentially) to the lives of the Jewish people through time, and also to the lives of the Christian people today.

The readings chosen for Ash Wednesday and the successive Sunday of Lent speak of the following characteristics of the life of God's people. They are called to be who they were meant to be; they acknowledge the fragility of the human condition; they embrace the potential and possibilities of the human condition; they live in covenantal relationship with God; they live in right relationship with persons in need and with the rest of creation; and they live lives of prayer, wisdom, word and blessing.

The readings proposed for the Easter season have to do with the following characteristics of the life of God's people: they find life in the midst of death (three Sundays); they live lives of love; they live lives of fidelity; they live lives of wisdom; they experience the presence of wisdom; they experience the creative and life-giving breath of God.<sup>15</sup>

### **Passion Sunday and Good Friday**

Choosing passages from the Hebrew Scriptures for Passion and Good Friday involves certain additional issues. Thus the liturgies for these days are focused on the person of Jesus in ways that are distinctive: they relate to the last days of his life and to his death. The present readings from the Hebrew Scriptures interpret Jesus as an obedient and suffering servant of God.

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures that tell about the life and ministry of Moses have here been selected for Passion Sunday. Like the other readings for Lent, they are intended to speak about the life of God's people. In this particular liturgical context, however, the life and work of Moses also speak, for Christians, about Jesus' life and ministry. The intention is not to see Jesus in Moses or to say that Jesus has replaced Moses; rather Jesus is viewed in continuity with Moses as a leader of God's people. The stories about Moses help Christians understand Jesus.

Two kinds of readings from the Hebrew Scriptures are proposed here for Good Friday. Again, they speak about the life of God's people; they also have particular relevance to the life and death of Jesus. One set tells about fidelity to God in life-threatening circumstances. The other includes stories of giving life at the moment of death. The original stories are not "taken over" by Jesus or by Christian interpretation. Instead, Jesus and the Christian people are seen in continuity with their forebears; the original stories help to interpret the meaning of Jesus' death and of the Christian life.

Hopefully, this approach to the use of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Christian liturgy builds bridges with the Jewish people today in addition to improving the Christian liturgy. Thus it stresses continuity with the Jewish people rather than discontinuity; it implies close relationship between those who use the same or similar readings in their worship; and it shows greater honor to the common heritage of Jews and Christians.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the alternative and novel readings proposed below exemplify the principle of “appreciation of the Hebrew Scriptures as a source of faith with their own perpetual value” and satisfy the needs of the Christian liturgy. I offer these suggestions for discussion and evaluation.<sup>16</sup>

## Proposed Readings

**Ash Wednesday:** God's people are called to be who they are meant to be.

One reading for year A names us as created male and female in God's image ("Humankind is created in God's image," Genesis 1:26–2:3), while a second says that we are re-created to be God's people of praise ("God does a new thing," Isaiah 43:15-21).

One reading for year B says that we are called to care for the hungry and afflicted ("Loose the bonds of injustice," Isaiah 58:6-12), while another says that we are invited to eat and drink of holy wisdom ("Eat your fill of my fruits," Sirach 24:1-2, 19-22).

One reading for year C says that we are chosen to be God's own people, purely out of the love of God ("God loved you and redeemed you," Deuteronomy 7:7-11), while a second passage says that we are precious and beloved of God ("Called by God's name," Isaiah 43:1-7).

At present the reading for all three years is "Rend your hearts" (Joel 2:12-18).

**First Sunday of Lent:** God's people acknowledge the fragility of the human condition.

For year A, stories from the early chapters of Genesis have been selected. "The man and woman in the garden" (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7) tells of the struggle having to do with tree of knowledge of good and evil. "Cain and Abel" (Genesis 4:1-10) has to do with conflict between siblings; and "The tower of Babel" (Genesis 11:1-9) speaks of cultural divisions among peoples.

For year B, several stories of "Grumbling in the desert" (Exodus 16:1-3 or Exodus 17:1-7 or Numbers 21:4-9) have to do with lack of trust and courage. "The golden calf" ("Exodus 32:1-6) tells about forgetting God and constructing idols, while "Fear and rebellion" (Deuteronomy 1:19-33, 41-45) speaks of refusal to follow divine direction and failure to trust God.

For year C, several stories of sexual abuse and violence against women have been chosen to provide opportunity to condemn this type of behavior: "Rape of Dinah" (Genesis 34:1-7, 25b-31); "David lusts after Bathsheba and plots the death of her husband" (2 Samuel 11:2-26); "Rape and murder of the Levite's wife" (Judges 19:22-30); and "Rape of Tamar" (2 Samuel 13:1-22). In addition, "Ahab and Jezebel plots against Naboth" (1 Kings 21:1-16) tells of injustice on the part of those who are politically and economically powerful.

At present the readings for years A, B, C, respectively, are: "The creation and the sin of our first parents: (Genesis 2:7-9, 16-18, 25; 3:1-7); "Covenant with Noah" (Genesis 9:8-15), and "Profession of faith" (Deuteronomy 26:4-10).

***Second Sunday of Lent:*** God's people embrace the potential and possibilities of the human condition.

Readings selected for year A include several stories of human encounter with the divine. "The three angels visit Abraham and Sarah" (Genesis 18:1-10) speaks about providing hospitality to the divine and receiving the promise of an alternative future. "Moses and the burning bush" (Exodus 3:1-6, 13-15) tells of being called by God and learning God's name in mysterious circumstances. Finally, "Elijah encounters God (1 Kings 19:9b-13a) tells about encountering God in sheer silence.

Readings chosen for year B include several stories of promises and opportunities offered by God. "Jacob's dream" (Genesis 28:10-22) tells about receiving a promise of God's continuing presence. "Rahab and the scouts" (Joshua 2:1-24) has to do with defying the ruler to protect Israel's brave ones. Finally, "Would that all God's people were prophets" (Numbers 11:24-30) offers a vision of God's spirit being given to all.

Readings for year C include stories of freedom and new life. "Entrance into the promised land and first passover" (Joshua 4:19-24; 5:10-12) speaks of the experience and celebration of freedom. "Elisha restores the woman's son to life" (2 Kings 4:18-37) tells about a mother's love and how God's prophets give life.

At present the readings for years A, B and C, respectively, are "The calling of Abraham" (Genesis 12:1-4); "Abraham and Isaac" (Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18); "Covenant with Abraham" (Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18).

***Third Sunday of Lent:*** God's people live in covenantal relationship with God.

The readings selected for year A tell stories of covenant from the book of Genesis. "Covenant with Noah" (Genesis 8:13-22 or Genesis 9:8-17) speaks of God's covenant with all humankind, while "Covenant and blessing of Abraham and Sarah" (Genesis 17:1-8, 15-22) tells about the covenant and blessing of Israel's ancestors.

Some readings chosen for year B tell about the covenant of Sinai: "God called from the mountain" (Exodus 19:1-25 or portions), "God descended in a cloud" (Exodus 33:12 -- 34:10 or portions), or "God spoke to the whole assembly from the mountain" (Deuteronomy 5:22-27). Others have to do with the covenant with David: "Choice and anointing of David" (1 Samuel 16:1-13); "David's throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:1-17 or 7:11b-17); or "An everlasting covenant" (2 Samuel 23:1-5).

The readings for year C speak of the continuing -- indeed eternal -- covenant with God's people: "An everlasting covenant" (Ezekiel 37:23b-28); "Covenant of peace" (Isaiah 54:9-14); and "An everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 55:1-13).

At present the readings for years A, B and C, respectively, are "Give us water to drink" (Exodus 17:3-7); "Ten commandments / Sinai" (Exodus 20:1-17); "Moses and the burning bush" (Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15).

**Fourth Sunday of Lent:** God's people live in right relationship with persons in need and with the rest of creation.

One passage for year A speaks of love of neighbor and gives practical ways in which this is manifested: "Justice and sharing with those in need" (Deuteronomy 24:10-15, 17-22). Two others tell of the sharing of meager resources: "A widow feeds the prophet Elijah" (1 Kings 17:8-16) and "Sharing leftovers" (Ruth 2:14-18).

Readings for year B have to do with God's gift of creation. One passage describes the bounty of God's promised land: "God is bringing you into a good land" (Deuteronomy 8:7-10). Another speaks both of sabbath and of the sabbatical year: "The land shall rest the seventh year" (Exodus 23:10-12). Finally two others tell about creation from the perspective of holy wisdom: "God's wisdom in creation" (Job 38:22-41; 39:1-2, 19-20, 26-27) and "Wisdom, like a cedar in Lebanon" (Sirach 24:1-2, 12-17).

One passage chosen for year C sets forth an image of waters that are bountiful and that support life and healing" ("The river of life," Ezekiel 47:1-2, 7-12), while the other is a hymn of praise to God for creation ("Let the earth bless God," Prayer of Azariah and Song 35-60 / Daniel 3:57-82.).

At present the readings are "David was anointed king" (1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a, year A); "Infidelity / punishment / salvation / Cyrus" (2 Chronicles 36:14-17a, 19-23, year B); and "Entering the Promised Land" (Joshua 5:9a, 10-12, year C).

**Fifth Sunday of Lent:** God's people live lives of prayer, wisdom, word and blessing.

For year A, several readings have been chosen that tell about women and men at prayer: "Hannah, model of prayer" (1 Samuel 2:1-10); "Solomon, model of prayer" (1 Kings 3:3-9); "Nehemiah, model of prayer" (Nehemiah 1:5-11); "Judith, model of prayer" (Judith 9:1-12); and "Esther, model of prayer" (Esther [Greek] 14:3-13).

For year B, two readings are proposed that have to do with God's word: "The Ten Commandments" (Exodus 20:1-17 or Deuteronomy 5:1-21), while another praises God's words: "Keep these words" (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). In addition, several passages speak of holy wisdom: "Prize wisdom highly" (Proverbs 4:5-13); "The one who knows all things" (Baruch 3:9-15, 29 – 4:4); and "Wisdom was created first" (Sirach 1:1-10).

For year C, several readings that speak of blessing have been selected: "Rebekah is blessed" (Genesis 24:53-61); "The blessing of Aaron" (Numbers 6:22-27); "God is blessed for Abigail" (1 Samuel 25:32-35); and "Judith is blessed" (Judith 13:18-20).

At present the readings are; "I will put my spirit within you" (Ezekiel 37:12-14, year A); "New covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31-34, year B); and "I am about to do a new thing" (Isaiah 43:16-21, year C).

***Passion (Palm) Sunday:*** The life and ministry of Moses is an example for the life and work of God's people.

For year A, stories of Moses are taken from the book of Exodus: "The people believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses" (Exodus 14:21-22, 29, 31); "You should represent the people before God" (Exodus 18:13-23); "God summoned Moses" (Exodus 19:16-20); and "Moses read the book of the covenant to the people" (Exodus 24:1-8).

Additional stories about Moses have been chosen for year B: "Moses intercedes with God for the people" (Exodus 32:11-13); "Moses prayed to the Lord" (Numbers 11:1-3); and "With Moses God spoke face to face" (Numbers 12:6-8a).

For year C, stories of Moses are taken from the book of Deuteronomy: "Moses prayed for the people" (Deuteronomy 9:18-29); "A prophet like Moses" (Deuteronomy 18:15-18); and "The death of Moses" (Deuteronomy 34:5-12),

At present the reading is "I know I shall not be put to shame" (Isaiah 50:4-7).

***Good Friday:*** God's people are life-giving and live with fidelity.

Two readings have to do with giving life at the moment of death: "Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin: (Genesis 35:9-20), and "The wife of Phineas dies in childbirth and the ark of God is captured (1 Samuel 4:1-22).

Two other readings tell stories of fidelity to God in life-threatening circumstances. "The binding of Isaac" (Genesis 22:1-15), and "Imprisonment of Jeremiah" (Jeremiah 37:1-22; 38:1-

16 (or portions).

At present the reading is “He was oppressed and afflicted” (Isaiah 52:12–53:13).

***First Sunday of Easter:*** God’s people find life in the midst of death.

The reading selected for year A is “Hagar is saved from death and exile” (Genesis 16:1-16). God provides water for this victim of familial estrangement and an unjust social system and takes her home again..

For year B, the story of “The widow’s son is restored to life (1 Kings 17:17-24) has been chosen. God gives life through the ministry of the prophet.

Year C’s reading is “Jonah is saved from the whale” (Jonah 1:17 – 2:10). God extricates from danger one commissioned to preach God’s word.

***Second Sunday of Easter:*** God’s people find life in the midst of death.

For year A, the story of “Joseph is saved from death” (Genesis 37:12-28)) has been chosen. God rescues a victim of family jealousy and violence.

The reading selected for year B is “The widow and Elijah are saved from death” (1 Kings 17:8-16). God saves two faithful ones in time of drought.

Year C’s reading is “The three youth are saved from death” (Daniel 3:13-20, 24-26). God saves three who refuse to serve false gods.

***Third Sunday of Easter:*** God’s people find life in the midst of death.

The reading selected for year A is “Moses is saved from death” (Exodus 1:15 – 2:10). God saves the infant from a tyrant.

For year B, the story of “Susanna’s life is saved” (Susanna / Daniel 13:15-49, 63) has been chosen. God saves one threatened by sexual abuse and violence.

Year C’s reading is “Daniel is saved from death” (Daniel 6:7, 13-23). God saves one who

defies unjust laws.

***Fourth Sunday of Easter:*** God's people live lives of love.

The story selected for year A is "Love of God" (Deuteronomy 6:1-9); it speaks of loving God with all one's heart and soul and might.

For year B the passage chosen is "Love of neighbor" (Leviticus 19:1-4, 9-18); it tells of being holy, sharing with the poor, and acting justly.

The reading for year C is "Mutual love" (Song of Solomon 2:8-17; 4:1, 10-16); it speaks of listening to the voice of the beloved, mutual companionship, and appreciating the sweetness of mutual love.

***Fifth Sunday of Easter:*** God's people live lives of fidelity.

For year A the passage chosen is "Making just laws and redressing grievances" (Numbers 27:1-8); it tells of taking care that laws and customs exemplify justice and of being open to making changes for the sake of justice.

For year B the reading is "God's blessings" (Deuteronomy 28:1-14); it speaks of the good things that will come to God's people if they are faithful.

Year C's reading is "Choose life!" (Deuteronomy 30:11-20); it has to do with loving God and observing the commandments.

***Sixth Sunday of Easter:*** God's people live lives of wisdom.

"Live according to wisdom" (Sirach 51:13-21) has been chosen for year A; it speaks of praying for wisdom, delighting in wisdom, and seeking to live according to wisdom.

For year B, "Come to wisdom" (Sirach 6:18-31) has been selected; it tells of teaching wisdom to children, honoring wisdom in the elderly, and enjoying the rest that wisdom gives.

Year C's reading is "Wisdom teaches her children" (Sirach 4:11-18); it has to do with loving and seeking wisdom, listening to and obeying wisdom, and remaining faithful to wisdom.

***Seventh Sunday of Easter:*** God's people experience the presence of holy wisdom.

The reading chosen for year A is "Wisdom brings her people out of Egypt" (Wisdom 10:15 —11:5); it speaks of recognizing wisdom as liberator from oppression, welcoming prophets whom wisdom raises up, and listening to the speech wisdom gives the voiceless.

For year B, the passage selected is "Wisdom makes her dwelling" (Sirach 24:1-12); this has to do with praising God for wisdom, listening for wisdom in the assembly, and recognizing the wisdom who dwells among God's people.

Year C's reading is "Wisdom makes herself known" (Wisdom 6:12-16); this says that wisdom makes herself known to those who desire her and that she meets them in every thought.

***Pentecost:*** God's people experience the creative and life-giving breath of God.

One reading selected for year A is "The breath of life" (Genesis 2:4b-10, 18, 21-25), while a second is "New breath in dry bones" (Ezekiel 37:1-14); God's loving-kindness is experienced in creation and in re-creation.

For year B, one reading is "Restoration and a new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:1-34 or portions) and a second is "Sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28-32); God's loving-kindness is experienced in liberation, covenant and in prophesy.

One passage chosen for year C is "Wisdom and the holy spirit" (Wisdom 9:9-18), while a second is "Wisdom beside God at creation" (Proverbs 8:22-31); God's loving-kindness is experienced in wisdom and in creation.

## Notes

1. Pros and cons of the terminology used (i.e., Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures and alternatives) are considered in Laurence Hull Stookey, “Marcion, Typology, and Lectionary Preaching,” *Worship* 66 (May 1992) 251-262; here note 1; and Bernhard W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1999) 4-7.
2. *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations* (1985 revision), by the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, National Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Washington DC: Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1985.) p. 6, n. 10a.
3. On this point I am indebted to Stookey, *Marcion*, and Anderson, *Contours*, pp9-15, 327-342.
4. This must be qualified because I, as a Roman Catholic, include books which are not in the Jewish Scriptures – the so-called apocryphal or pseudepigraphal books.
5. Anderson, *Contours*, p. 11.
6. For the sake of brevity I do not consider the Revised Common Lectionary here; it is used by several churches and is quite similar to the Roman Lectionary. Both lectionaries include three readings for each Sunday, and a cycle of readings for three years.
7. Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* , n. 99.
8. Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass*,. n. 97.
9. Though Passion Sunday is considered the sixth or last Sunday of lent, its readings are more closely related to those of Good Friday than to those of the first five Sundays of Lent.
10. Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass*, n. 99..
11. Stookey, *Marcion*, 259-260.
12. Stookey, *Marcion*, 259.
13. Adrian Nocent, *The Liturgical Year: III The Paschal Triduum. The Easter Season.* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1977) 84; see also *Days of the Lord: The Liturgical Year*, vol. 3: Easter Triduum, Easter Season. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993) 24.
14. “Harmonization” may take several forms; see for example Gail Ramsahw, “The gift of three readings,” *Worship* 73 (January 1999) 2-12.

15. I do not consider the feast of the Ascension here as nominally it is celebrated on the Thursday of the sixth week of Easter. In other studies, however, I have assigned readings from the Wisdom literature for this feast.

16. In other studies I also propose alternative readings from the Christian Scriptures for Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent, for Good Friday, and for the Sundays of the Easter Season and the Ascension: see “Re-visioning the Liturgy of Good Friday,” “Re-visioning the Lectionary Readings for Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent,” and “Re-visioning the Lectionary Readings for the Easter Season.” All are posted at <http://www.compumart.ab.ca/fhenders>.