

LECTIONARY OVERVIEW 2010: YEAR C

The Incarnation Cycle

The selections from Luke for Advent-Christmas are lifted from the context of the gospel's narrative and placed at the service of this season's focus. The "supranarrative" thus created, from the first Sunday of Advent through the Baptism of the Lord, faithfully echoes the keynotes of Luke's gospel.

As in every year, Advent of Year C begins by moving ahead to the time of Jesus' final coming. Yet even as he describes the cosmic cataclysm that marks the end, Luke's Jesus faces his passion calmly, and urges his followers to "stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand." On the second Sunday, Advent moves back to the time of John the Baptist. Luke, the historian-theologian, unfolds his story "in order," carefully establishing the historical reference points, and even taking his readers on a political tour of the region.



John continues on the third Sunday, by challenging us to change our lives to Luke's program of practical discipleship: generosity to those in need, integrity in daily tasks, and good relations as citizens and workers in the real world. Advent concludes on the fourth Sunday even earlier in the narrative, at the time of Jesus' historical coming. Mary and Elizabeth sing God's praises. In Luke, whose theme is the fulfillment of God's promises, there is a blessing for the woman "who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

During the Christmas season, we read the infancy stories of Luke (and Matthew), lovely in their simplicity and poignant in their beauty, but (as those who read perceptively will discover) ominous as well. The characters and events presented point to the acceptance and rejection that this child will meet in adulthood. In Year C, the Feast of the Holy Family gospel depicts a 12-year-old Jesus, whose attention is focused on the city of destiny – Jerusalem – even as he will in his adulthood. Luke's account of Jesus' baptism notes that Jesus "had been baptized and was praying" when the voice of election sounds from heaven.

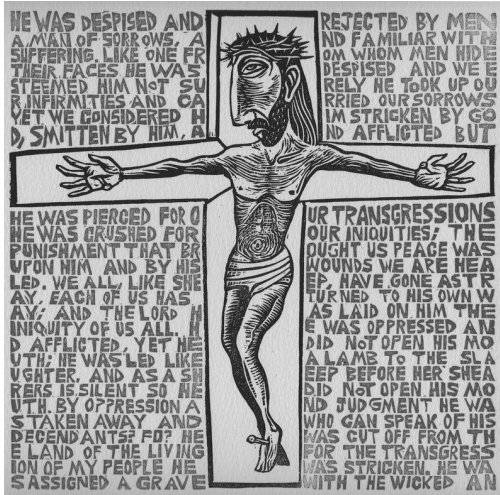
11/28	Advent 1	End times; keep watch!	Lk 21:25-28, 34-36
12/5	Advent 2	John the Baptist	Lk 3:1-6
12/8	Immaculate Conception	Gabriel & Mary	Lk 1:26-38
12/12	Advent 3	John Preaches to groups	Lk 3:10-18
12/19	Advent 4	Mary & Elizabeth	Lk 1:39-45
12/25	Christmas (Midnight)	Nativity/Announcement to Shepherds	Lk 2:1-14
12/26	Feast of the Holy Family	Jesus in the Temple	Lk 2:41-52
1/1	Mary, Mother of God	Shepherds' visit	Lk 2:16-21
1/2	Epiphany	Visit of Magi	Mt 2:1-12
1/9	Baptism of the Lord	Baptism of Jesus at prayer	Lk 3:21-22

The Paschal Cycle

In Luke, who values time as the theater of salvation history, the devil leaves Jesus after the temptations “until an opportune time” (NRSV). Jerusalem is mentioned again in Luke’s account of the transfiguration as Moses and Elijah discuss with Jesus his “exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.”

***RCIA Leaders:** Remember that **parishes with elect present use the Year A lectionary for the remaining Sundays of Lent**, so that the ancient Lenten gospels from John (the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus) may be proclaimed (see RCIA, #146). The language of the scrutinies (which should not be adapted) presumes these readings have been proclaimed.

In the year C gospels, however, we hear characteristically Lucan motifs: the fruitless tree



is mercifully spared (3rd Sunday), the prodigal Son and forgiving father (4th Sunday, and again on the 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time), and the story of the woman caught in adultery (the 5th Sunday gospel comes from John, but sounds as if it belongs in Luke).

Holy Week begins on Passion Sunday with Luke’s account of Jesus’ Passover. Raymond Brown has highlighted features unique to Luke’s narrative. They are important to summarize because they recapitulate Luke’s gospel as a whole (c.f. *A Crucified Christ in Holy Week*, The Liturgical Press, 1986). In Luke’s passion, Jesus is not “sorrowful unto death” nor “prostrate in

the dust,” but prays on his knees, and is strengthened by an angel for his *agonia*. This is not “agony” in the usual sense of the word, but a Greek term that “describes the supreme tension of the athlete covered with sweat at the start of the contest” (49-50). Jesus rises from prayer, ready to enter the trial, submissive to the Father’s will. Jesus, whose ministry was devoted to deeds of healing and proclamations of forgiveness, heals an enemy at the moment of his arrest. He reconciles the Galilean king and the Roman governor, speaks with empathy to the women of Jerusalem about the catastrophe coming upon them, forgives those who crucify him, and even offers their ignorance before the Father as a mitigating excuse! Finally, he pardons the repentant thief, and welcomes him as the first citizen of the new kingdom. Then he dies, tranquilly commending his spirit into the hands of his Father.

The gospel of John is featured every year during the Easter season, but during the Year of Luke we get a “bonus” from the author of Luke. Throughout the 50 days, the first readings come from Luke’s “second volume.” The Acts of the Apostles continues the motifs of his gospel: The Spirit descends once again on Mary, this time in the midst of the assembled disciples; Stephen dies as Jesus had, praying for his enemies and commending his spirit to the Lord; healing and prayer are present throughout, with joy in the Holy Spirit and surprise at the salvation that reaches out to embrace the whole world.

3/6	Lent 1	Temptation of Jesus	Lk 4:1-13
3/13	Lent 2	Transfiguration	Lk 9:28-36
3/20	Lent 3	Repentance or destruction	Lk 13:1-9
		<i>OR Woman of Samaria</i>	Jn 4:5-32
3/27	Lent 4	Parable of Prodigal Son	Lk 15:1-3, 11-32
		<i>OR Man born blind</i>	Jn 9:1-41
4/3	Lent 5	Woman caught in adultery	Jn 8:1-11
		<i>OR Raising of Lazarus</i>	Jn 11:1-45
4/10	Passion Sunday	Entry into Jerusalem	Lk 19:28-40
		Passion of the Lord	Lk 22:14-23:26
4/14	Holy Thursday	Washing of the feet	Jn 13:1-15
4/15	Good Friday	Passion of the Lord	Jn 18:1-19:42
4/16	Easter (Vigil)	Resurrection of the Lord	Lk 24:1-12

4/24	Easter 2¹	Growth of the Church Jesus & Thomas	Acts 5:12-16 Jn 20:19-31
5/1	Easter 3	“We are witnesses” “Feed my lambs”	Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41 Jn 21:1-19
5/8	Easter 4	“A light to the Gentiles” “My sheep hear my voice”	Acts 13:14, 43-52 Jn 10:27-30
5/15	Easter 5	Paul & Barnabas preaching “As I have loved you...”	Acts 14:21-27 Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35
5/22	Easter 6	Gentiles & circumcision “The Advocate...will teach you.”	Acts 15:1-2, 22-29 Jn 14:23-29
5/29	The Feast of the Ascension	“You will be my witnesses” “You are witnesses”	Acts 1:1-11 Lk 24:46-53
6/5	Pentecost	Filled with the Holy Spirit “The Advocate...will teach you.”	Acts 2:1-11 Jn 14:15-16, 23b-26

Ordinary Time

Scholars construct their outline of Luke’s narrative by attending to the geographical reference points in the course of Jesus’ ministry. After the infancy narrative and a summary of the ministry of John the Baptist, the account of Jesus’ anointing by the Spirit and testing by the devil leads to the public ministry. The rest of the gospel of Luke unfolds in three general sections according to location:

- the ministry of Jesus in Galilee (Lk 4:14-9:50)
- the travel narrative, on the way to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-19:48)
- the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem: his teaching in the temple (Lk 20:1-21:38), his passion and death (Lk 22:1-23:56), and finally his exaltation (Lk 24:1-53).

The framers of the Lectionary were attuned to this approach, although it is important to remember the distinction between the gospel narrative and the lectionary supranarrative: the destination of the gospel narrative is Christ’s death and resurrection; the destination of the lectionary supranarrative is the end of the liturgical cycle, its focus on Christ’s return in glory and the impending judgment (and in Luke, the redemption of the universal community of disciples).

Edward Foley, in a very useful article titled “Tackling Ordinary Time—Divide and Conquer,”² suggests “examining the literary structure of the biblical books which provide the lections for a given season...to discover if there are literary markers in the readings themselves that indicate important subdivisions in the word” (70). Foley observes: “Such



subdivisions in the word could serve as useful frameworks for the homilist in shaping a series of manageable preaching plans.” While directed to homilists, Foley’s advice is pertinent to preparers and presiders as well. Choice of responsorial psalm, preface, and Eucharistic prayer might be ordered according to such a pattern.

Because of the way the liturgical year is structured, we always “lose” several Sundays in the middle of Ordinary Time. Sadly, in 2022 we do not hear half of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Most notably, we lose the gospel of the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Peter’s

¹ On the Sundays during the 50 Days of Easter, we draw from the Gospel of John (except for on the Feast of the Ascension). We also, however draw exclusively from the Acts of the Apostles for the first reading. Since Acts is “Book II” of the author of Luke, these texts should be studied when considering how Luke might guide the liturgical year.

² *New Theology Review*, August, 1999: 69-72.

great Confession, which scripture scholars consider a peak moment in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus also outlines the connection between discipleship and the Cross in this passage. This is usually a great Sunday to schedule the Rite of Entrance into the Order of Catechumens, with its signing of the senses with the Cross of Jesus Christ.

***RCIA leaders:** Consider setting aside the Sundays highlighted in **yellow** below – with their themes of calling and/or discipleship – to celebrate the Rite of Entrance into the Order of Catechumens. They would also be great Sundays to incorporate blessings or anointings (see RCIA #81-101) into your dismissal. In the same vein, since baptized candidates should be brought into full communion whenever they are ready (and – in accordance with the RCIA National Statutes # 32 & 33 – rarely at the Easter Vigil), these might be good Sundays for the Rite of Entrance Into the full Communion of the Catholic Church.

Transitional Passages			
1/16	Ordinary 2	Wedding feast at Cana	Jn 2:1-12
1/23	Ordinary 3	Jesus preaching in Galilee	Lk 1:1-4
1/30	Ordinary 4	Jesus rejected at Nazareth	Lk 4:21-30
The Galilean Ministry of Jesus			
2/6	Ordinary 5	Miraculous catch, calling of first disciples	Lk 5:1-11
2/13	Ordinary 6	4 “beatitudes” & “woes”	Lk 6:17, 20-26
2/20	Ordinary 7	Love your enemies	Lk 6:17:20-28
2/27	Ordinary 8	On judging	Lk 6:39-45
<i>Lost in 2022</i>	Ordinary 9	Healing of Centurion’s servant	Lk 7:1-10
	Ordinary 10	Raising of widow’s son	Lk 7:11-17
	Ordinary 11	Woman with ointment	Lk 7:36-50; 8:1-3
	Ordinary 12	Peter’s Confession; conditions of Discipleship	Lk 9:18-24
6/12	Feast of the Holy Trinity	Final discourse	Jn 16:12-15
6/19	Body & Blood of Christ	Feeding of 5000	Lk 9:11b-17
Travel Narrative, Part 1: Qualities Jesus Demands of His Followers			
6/26	Ordinary 13	Nature of discipleship	Lk 9:51-62
7/3	Ordinary 14	Sending & return of 70	Lk 10:1-12, 17-20
7/10	Ordinary 15	The good Samaritan	Lk 10:25-37
7/17	Ordinary 16	Martha and Mary	Lk 10:38-42
7/24	Ordinary 17	The Lord’s Prayer	Lk 11:1-13
7/31	Ordinary 18	Parable of the Rich Fool	Lk 12:13-21
8/7	Ordinary 19	The servant’s wages	Lk 12:35-48
8/14	Ordinary 20	Not peace, but division	Lk 12:49-53
8/21	Ordinary 21	Exclusion from the Kingdom	Lk 13:22-30
8/28	Ordinary 22	Teaching on humility	Lk 14:1, 7-14
9/4	Ordinary 23	Cost of Discipleship	Lk 14:25-33
Lost and Found: The Gospel Within the Gospel			
9/11	Ordinary 24	The Lost Coin; Lost Sheep; Lost Son	Lk 15
Travel Narrative – Part II: Obstacles Facing Jesus’ Followers			
9/18	Ordinary 25	The Unjust Steward	Lk 16:1-13
9/25	Ordinary 26	Rich Man & Lazarus	Lk 16:19-31
10/2	Ordinary 27	The Servants’ Wages	Lk 17:5-10
10/9	Ordinary 28	Healing of the 10 Lepers	Lk 17:11-19
10/16	Ordinary 29	The Unjust Judge	Lk 18:1-8
10/23	Ordinary 30	Pharisee & the Publican	Lk 18:9-14
Ministry in Jerusalem			
10/30	Ordinary 31	Zacchaeus	Lk 19:1-10
11/6	Ordinary 32	Question about resurrection	Lk 20:27-38
11/13	Ordinary 33	Signs of the parousia	Lk 21:5-19
The Passion of Christ: The Great Reconciliation			
11/20	Christ the King	The Repentant Thief	Lk 23:35-43