

## A Few Remarks about the Lectionary after Fifty Years of Existence

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to present the historical development of the lectionary for use in the Holy Mass, then to summarize the principles of the present lectionary and its ecumenical meaning, more specifically, its influence on the protestant lectionary. Based on the historical facts and the recent documents of the Holy See, the proposal for partial renewal of the Sunday Lectionary will be discussed. The main method used in the study is the analysis of the historical sources, documents of the Holy See, and theological studies. The critical analysis and comparative method will lead to the synthetic presentation of postulates of the partial renewal of the present lectionary after fifty years of usage in the liturgy. The analysis conclusions provide suggestions for the enrichment of the lectionary: firstly, with the passages from the Old Testament read in their whole context, not only according to the harmonization with the text of the Gospel; secondly, with the thematic selection of the second reading compatible with the first reading, and the Gospel reading; thirdly, with the texts pointing out the role of women in the history of salvation.

**Keywords:** lectionary, Bible, liturgy

The Second Vatican Council was intentionally pastoral and not dogmatic in character. At the center of the Council's renewal of the Church was the liturgy as the source and summit of its life. The liturgy was to be renewed as first. It underlines the foundational meaning of the liturgy as the *locus theologicus* for the doctrine of the Church, the intrinsic reality of the practical life of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, and the community of believers.

The liturgical community was at the center of the renewal of the Church by the Second Vatican Council. This explains the emphasis the Council Fathers put on *actuosa participatio*, i.e., active participation of the faithful in the holy liturgy. This was the aim of the liturgy renewal, explained in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*): "In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community" (SC 21).

One of the important elements of the renewed liturgy was the lectionary comprising the readings from Sacred Scripture. As stressed in the Second Vatican Council, these readings are the perennial and intrinsic part of the celebration of the Holy

Mass. “From that time onwards the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things ‘which were in all the scriptures concerning him’ (Luke 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which ‘the victory and triumph of his death are again made present,’ and at the same time giving thanks ‘to God for his unspeakable gift’ (2 Cor 9:15) in Christ Jesus, ‘in praise of his glory’ (Eph 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit” (SC 6).

Readings from the Scripture are necessary for the spiritual life of the faithful, as the Eucharist itself. Thanks to God’s word, the liturgy participants grow in wisdom, and thanks to the Eucharist, they grow in holiness. The divine interventions announced in God’s word are renewed in the Eucharist: “The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy.”<sup>1</sup>

The Council Fathers desired to revive the pastoral activity of the Church as well as the intense relation of the faithful with God by means of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the very lectionary was to provide Catholics with rich sustenance from the Bible.<sup>2</sup> According to the Second Vatican Council’s *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from Scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony (SC 24).

The so-called three-year lectionary, promulgated officially by Pope Paul VI on May 29, was introduced into pastoral practice in the whole Church on November 28, 1971, the first Advent Sunday, beginning the liturgical year.<sup>3</sup> Almost sixty years have passed since the proclamation of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The year 2021 saw the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the new lectionary. This very jubilee gives an opportunity to reflect and recognize the values of the renewed lectionary and to discuss the possibility of its improvement.

This paper aims to emphasize some of the values of the present worldwide three-year lectionary and explore some minor improvements, taking into account

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<sup>1</sup> “The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God’s word and at the table of the Eucharist from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy.” Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 10.

<sup>2</sup> See Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, IV, C, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ordo Lectionum Missae*; cf. Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 28–29.

the development of theology, especially ecumenical dialog, and the social changes and sensitivity concerning the role of women in society. The steps undertaken will provide us with the definition of the lectionary, its main purpose, the principles underpinning the lectionary issued at the direction of the Second Vatican Council, and finally, its value and proposal for improvement.

## 1. The Definition and Purpose of the Lectionary

A lectionary is an “orderly sequence of selections from Scripture to be read aloud at public worship by a religious community.”<sup>4</sup> This definition of a lectionary contains three important elements. First, a lectionary cannot be identified with the Bible as such; it comprises selected passages from the Bible to be used for worship, and the latter reciprocally becomes the first hermeneutic of the scriptural word. Second, the passages are not random and haphazard; they are carefully chosen and systematized in patterns according to specific theological and pastoral principles. Third, the liturgical and pastoral purpose of a lectionary, and specifically the type and frequency of the meetings of Christians, determine how the Bible fragments are chosen and distributed: it is different for the solemn celebrations and the regular daily Holy Mass, and different still for the rites celebrated occasionally.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of a lectionary is to serve uniformity to worship at the Holy Mass and to provide the congregation of faithful abundantly with the Word of life.<sup>6</sup> The Holy Scripture passages intended for use in the liturgy are known by the Latin term “lections” or by the Greek term “pericope,” which means an “extract” of the Bible.

## 2. The Principles of the Present Lectionary

The liturgy reform undertaken by the Second Vatican Council included the renewal of the lectionary. Although the first Council’s document, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, does not contain a specific section dedicated to the lectionary, nevertheless, the indications scattered in the conciliar documents allow naming some principle guidelines for the order of the lectionary: the biblical texts are essential for the liturgical celebrations;<sup>7</sup> readings on Sundays and solemnities should be given pri-

<sup>4</sup> Reumann, “A History of Lectionaries,” 116; Waznak, *Introduction*, 73; Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 3–4.

<sup>6</sup> Waznak, *Introduction*, 73.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 24, 33, 35, 51; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, no. 21.

ority;<sup>8</sup> the lectionary should be adapted to modern times;<sup>9</sup> the lectionary should take into account the previous tradition;<sup>10</sup> it should include more readings concentrated on Christ as the fulfillment of the history of salvation,<sup>11</sup> and the center of each Christian celebration;<sup>12</sup> the lectionary should include texts, which would help to indicate in the homily the main principles of the Christian life<sup>13</sup> so that the faithful could have been more and more transformed by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. The Value of the Lectionary

The three-year lectionary underlines the priority of Sunday celebration, the primary day on which the faithful assemble to receive grace from the risen Lord and praise God through Him and with Him. The importance of the Sunday is emphasized instead of any societal interest, local traditions, or any other competing interests, which challenge the primary focus on Easter as the reason for the assembly.<sup>15</sup>

Another value of the lectionary is the more abundant proclamation of the Old Testament texts. The Tridentine Missal, published by Pope Pius V in 1570, contained 138 fragments of the Bible to be read on Sundays in a one-year cycle. However, there were only two readings for Sunday Masses: the first one – with three exemptions – from the Apostolic Letters and the second from the Gospel. It means that the Old Testament was somewhat unappreciated. Moreover, its texts were read only on three occasions in the liturgical year: the Solemnity of the Epiphany, Good Friday, and the Paschal Vigil.<sup>16</sup>

The discussed fruit of the Second Vatican Council offers even-handed treatment of all four gospels. The Gospel of John received the central meaning and was appointed for major solemnities and festive times of the liturgical year. The chance to hear differing Gospel narratives allows us to interpret the Scriptures as more than merely factual narratives about the past.<sup>17</sup>

After fifty years of practical use of the Sunday lectionary in the Holy Masses, it is worth asking whether this valuable liturgical book has room for improvement, that is to say, whether this treasure may shine even brighter.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 49, 106.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 4, 23, 37–40, 49, 107.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 4, 23, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 102.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 52.

<sup>14</sup> Sławiński, “Znaczenie,” 388; De Zan, *Introduzione*, 56; Bugnini, *La riforma*.

<sup>15</sup> Ramshaw, “The Ecumenical Gift,” 20.

<sup>16</sup> Nocent, “The Roman Lectionary,” 183; Sławiński, “Ecumenism,” 46.

<sup>17</sup> Ramshaw, “The Ecumenical Gift,” 20.

#### 4. The Proposal for Improving the Lectionary

The current lectionary introduced by the Second Vatican Council has been enriching the liturgical celebration of the Church for more than fifty years now. However, according to the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The lectionary, issued at the direction of the Council (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35), is meant to allow for a reading of Sacred Scripture that is ‘more abundant, more varied and more suitable.’ In its present state, it only partially fulfills this goal.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the fiftieth anniversary of introducing the lectionary to the liturgy provides an opportunity to reflect on its value and the potential enhancement of this remarkable liturgical book so that it gains even more splendor.

In the time that has passed since the last council, society has gone through an enormous technological development and experienced many social changes, globalization, and the development of strong movements like feminism. At the same time, theological studies, methods, and approaches to interpreting the Bible have developed. Besides the historical-critical methods and approaches based on tradition, new methods of literary analysis and approaches using human sciences, as well as contextual approaches, were taken seriously into consideration in the analysis of the Sacred Scripture and discussed in the above document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993).<sup>19</sup>

The proposals for consideration in the renewed version of the lectionary for Sundays include 1. renewed use of the Old Testament texts; 2. thematic selection of the second reading compatible with the first one and the Gospel; 3. enrichment of the Sunday lectionary with texts indicating the role of women in the history of salvation.

##### 4.1. Renewed Use of the Old Testament Texts

It is natural that the Gospel pericopes are central in the Christian liturgy of the word; the Old Testament readings were selected solely for harmonization with the Gospel. Nevertheless, some scholars observe “the inadequacy of the assumption that the Old Testament is ‘fulfilled’ in the New Testament.”<sup>20</sup> Such an interpretation gives the impression that the Old Testament is of lesser value than the New Testament. Gerard Sloyan warns that the fulfillment principle should not be used to portray the Jews as disloyal and incomplete while, at the same time, the disciples of Jesus as justified. “This is the triumphal understanding that all that has been realized in the Christ of

<sup>18</sup> See Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, IV, C, 1.

<sup>19</sup> The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*; see Dyk, *Co glosić*, 29–30.

<sup>20</sup> See Waznak, *Introduction*, 83.

glory has been realized in Christians. Since lectionary choices can contribute to this mentality, it must be all the more vigilantly resisted when they are employed.”<sup>21</sup>

The more abundant reservoir of the Hebrew Scriptures opened for the liturgical readings is a wonderful fruit of the Second Vatican Council. Those readings, appropriately assigned, in some way complement the Gospel readings. The ample use of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Christian liturgy is a sign of clear rejection of any influence of Marcionism. At the same time, it is the expression that the Church treasures and honors Jewish heritage. As Gail Ramshaw observes, “The lectionaries’ proposal of such a way forward between Christians and Jews seeks to repair previous church practice and offers to the wider society a path of reconciliation that is sorely needed.”<sup>22</sup>

However, it may also be observed that the harmonization principle that decides the selection of the Old Testament fragments to fit the Gospel does not allow us to enjoy the integral stories in their context but provides only mere snippets. Yet the knowledge of the main stories of the Old Testament is needed to understand the New Testament. The Pontifical Biblical Commission expresses this in the document entitled *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001): “Without the Old Testament, the New Testament would be an incomprehensible book, a plant deprived of its roots and destined to dry up and wither.”<sup>23</sup>

One has to remember that the Old Testament has value in itself as the word of God, although its interpretation in the liturgy is christocentric.<sup>24</sup> An inspiring proposal to integrate at least some main stories of the Old Testament into the lectionary has been offered by the Revised Common Lectionary, prepared and used by some non-Catholic denominations.

Before we develop this issue, it is worth observing that many Christian denominations have been enthusiastic about the new Catholic lectionary and have commented to some effect that it was “Catholicism’s greatest gift to Protestant preaching.”<sup>25</sup> Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches in the United States have been using the Catholic lectionary since 1970, with the Lutheran Church in the United States joining them in 1973. This was the case until 1983, when a group of Christian denominations prepared their own lectionary on the foundation of the Catholic one. Their lectionary was updated in 1992 and published as the *Revised Common Lectionary*.<sup>26</sup>

21 Sloyan, “The Lectionary,” 135; see Waznak, *Introduction*, 83.

22 Ramshaw, “The Ecumenical Gift,” 21.

23 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People*, 84.

24 “These considerations show the unique importance of the Old Testament for Christians, while at the same time bringing out the newness of christological interpretation. From apostolic times and in her living Tradition, the Church has stressed the unity of God’s plan in the two Testaments through the use of typology; this procedure is in no way arbitrary, but is intrinsic to the events related in the sacred text and thus involves the whole of Scripture.” See Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 41; Dyk, *Co głosić*, 51–52.

25 White, *Christian Worship*, 139.

26 See West, *Scripture and Memory*.

This revised version was accepted, among others, by Presbyterians, the United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, United Methodists, and Lutheran Churches in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

As Protestants drew inspiration from Catholics for their lectionary, it might have been fruitful for Catholics to have a common lectionary with Lutherans and at least some other Christian denominations.<sup>28</sup> According to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the lectionary issued at the direction of the Second Vatican Council “[...] even as it stands it has had positive ecumenical results.”<sup>29</sup> The reciprocal acknowledgment of the common Sunday lectionary for most Christians would be an inspiration, most of all for preachers. Catholics and other Christians could use reciprocally common aids for preaching during the liturgical year.

Compared to the Catholic one, the *Revised Common Lectionary* had alternative readings of the Old Testament in the Ordinary Time. They were offered not as the snippets harmonized with the Gospel but as the consecutive reading of the chosen parts of the Scriptures based on the *lectio continua* method. It means that the Protestant lectionary abandons the typological method in favor of continuous reading. Thus, in liturgical Year A, readings from the Torah are given because that year, the Gospel of Matthew is read, which is, so to speak, the most “Jewish” Gospel. Matthew’s work encompasses many quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament. In liturgical Year B, the Gospel of Mark is read, which refers to Jesus primarily as “the Son of David.” That is why it seemed proper to associate those readings with the stories about David. And finally, in Year C, the Gospel of Luke is read, which is marked by the sensitivity to social justice. Such a characteristic led the authors of the *Revised Common Lectionary* to associate it with readings from the Prophets, where there are many interventions concerning social justice.<sup>30</sup>

While the revised Protestant lectionary attracted the attention of some Catholic theologians, there are no initiatives in the Vatican regarding a common lectionary for Catholics and Protestants, at least those who use one.<sup>31</sup> Such a lectionary would be a significant ecumenical gesture and a huge step toward the unity of Christian communities, especially as the obstacles to a common approach to the word of God are not as many as those to intercommunion.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See Waznak, *Introduction*, 75; Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 52.

<sup>28</sup> Sławiński, “Ecumenism,” 47.

<sup>29</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, IV, C, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Sloyan, “Word and Sacrament,” 66; Sławiński, “Znaczenie,” 393.

<sup>31</sup> Waznak, *Introduction*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Sławiński, “Ecumenism,” 48.

#### 4.2. Thematic Selection of the Second Reading Compatible with the First One and the Gospel

The apostolic texts from the first century bear witness that the early Christians were aware of the intrinsic meaning of the word of God for the Church. They knew that the message of the risen Lord is and remains forever the center of the life of the Church and relevant to every area.<sup>33</sup>

There is a discussion about the practice of the second reading on the Sunday liturgy. The creators of the lectionary did not mean this reading on Sunday in Ordinary Time to harmonize with the other two readings. According to Robert Waznak:

[...] it does cause problems for hearers and preachers. It is like watching your favorite television program and at the same time trying to read the warnings of a hurricane that flash on the bottom of the television screen. Or it is similar to an orchestra beginning with overture of *Romeo and Juliet* (Old Testament Reading), then switching to the music of *Hello Dolly* (second reading), and finally ending with the music of *West Side Story* (Gospel reading). One could discern the connection between *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* but *Hello Dolly* in the middle of the common theme of star-crossed lovers is confusing and jolting. In a future revision of the lectionary, some liturgists have proposed that the second lesson be read at the end of the liturgy as a dismissal, similar to the *haftarah* at the end of the ancient synagogue service.<sup>34</sup>

This solution to read snippets of the apostolic letters at the end of the liturgy does not seem optimal. Another could be the thematic adjustment of the second reading to the Gospel, similarly to the selection of fragments from the Old Testament. Then all three readings could harmonize, which would facilitate the preachers to concentrate on one topic. Just such a method was used to select all readings on solemnities in Advent and Lent time.

Interestingly, Pope Benedict XVI, in both of his exhortations, i.e., *Sacramentum Caritatis* and *Verbum Domini*, pointed out that “given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies needs to be improved. The homily ‘is part of the liturgical action’ and is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful” (*SaCar* 46; *VD* 59). As the result of this care for the homily improvement, “the Homiletical Directory” has been suggested as the help for the preachers to enrich their sermons with the catechetical content:

The catechetical and paraenetic aim of the homily should not be forgotten. During the course of the liturgical year it is appropriate to offer the faithful, prudently and on

<sup>33</sup> See Ramshaw, “The Ecumenical Gift,” 21.

<sup>34</sup> Waznak, *Introduction*, 82.



the basis of the three-year lectionary, “thematic” homilies treating the great themes of the Christian faith, on the basis of what has been authoritatively proposed by the Magisterium in the four “pillars” of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the recent Compendium, namely: the profession of faith, the celebration of the Christian mystery, life in Christ and Christian prayer (*SaCar* 46).

What could help in the fulfillment of the desire of Pope Benedict XVI might be a reorganization of the texts taken from Apostolic Letters for the liturgy. Instead of continuous or semicontinuous readings, the thematic method might be suggested for selecting the texts from Apostolic Letters adjusted to the liturgical year. The wise selection of those texts might help to explain some main doctrinal themes to the faithful. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that neither the liturgy nor preaching should turn into a theological lecture separate from the celebrated mystery. The biblical readings and the homily are an integral part of the liturgy itself. The sermon should always point to Christ’s mystery being present and at work in the Sunday assembly. “The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the centre of every homily (*VD* 59).”

The liturgy is, first and foremost, a celebration of the mystery of Christ. Its didactic role is quite secondary to the most important, salvific, and cult anamnestic one. Therefore, it would be difficult to subordinate the texts of Sacred Scripture to specific theological themes. Thus, the current solution to read apostolic texts in a semicontinuous way appears optimal. At most, one can think of introducing apostolic works that are not heard during the Sunday liturgy. All theological additions to the biblical text are the task of the homily, which, as part of the liturgy, must respect its nature. This must also be respected in the length of the sermon because, as observes Pope Francis: “If the homily goes on too long, it will affect two characteristic elements of the liturgical celebration: its balance and its rhythm. [...] This means that the words of the preacher must be measured, so that the Lord, more than his minister, will be the centre of attention” (*EG* 138).

#### **4.3. Enrichment of the Sunday Lectionary with Texts Indicating the Role of Women in the History of Salvation**

Another aspect of possible enrichment of the lectionary concerns the role of women. As we know, biblical texts were written two millennia ago in a patriarchal culture. In that time and culture, the role of women was not appreciated as much as it is nowadays. It is enough to mention that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was still not easy for women to study. For example, Saint Edith Stein (1891–1942) was allowed to write and defend her doctorate in Philosophy, but even her promotor Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) was against her habilitation – and the following position it would give her –because

she was a woman. To illustrate the long-lasting unjust treatment of women, it is sufficient to mention their exclusion from voting during political elections. For instance, women in Poland received the right to vote in 1918, in Hungary in 1920, in Switzerland and Liechtenstein in 1971, and in the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden as late as 1991.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the lectionary has been prepared by a special group of theologians called *Coetus XI*. It consisted of eighteen celibatarians from six developed Western countries under the leadership of Fr. Cipriano Vagaggini, OSB (1909–1999).<sup>35</sup> Some theologians believe that the lectionary selections conserve the androcentrism of the Bible.<sup>36</sup> For example, a feminist author, Marjorie Procter-Smith, writes: “While biblical texts themselves generally present women as adjuncts to men, the lectionary hermeneutic, by intention to be selective, and by its tendency to focus on a few central major figures, such as Moses, David and Elijah, or the male disciples of Jesus (especially Peter and Paul), increase this marginalization of women characters.”<sup>37</sup>

There are some significant feminine figures in the Bible, including Deborah, Tamar, Judith, Ruth, Naomi, Esther, Bathsheba, Anna – mother of Samson, Susanna from the Book of Daniel, Anna the Prophetess, the Mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, and many others. They include widows, mothers, and virgins. Unfortunately, the stories of Esther, Ruth, Judith and other women are not read on Sundays. And such omission cannot be explained by the violence found in the books of Esther or Judith since the violent passages about David beheading Goliath are included in the Sunday lectionary.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the famous story about the worthy wife depicted in chapter 31 of Proverbs was chosen for the thirty-third Sunday of Year A. Still, it is not given in full: the passages mentioning that she serves her husband are included, but the description of how aptly she manages merchandise and “girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong” are omitted (Prov 31:17).<sup>39</sup>

Some Old Testament stories involving women have a strong sexual accent, which was considered better omitted. Nowadays, conversations about sexual orientation and such activities are no longer taboo. However, people seem shyer about talking about death than sex or gender. It is certainly not easy for celibate preachers to interpret such texts in the liturgy. On the other hand, would it not be an opportunity to talk about some problems discussed daily in marriages, which form the nucleus of society?

<sup>35</sup> See Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 28–29; Sławiński, “Ecumenism,” 46–47. According to Renato De Zan (*Introduzione*, 57), that group consisted initially of 7, then briefly of 17, and at the end of 900 experts in the field of liturgy, biblical and pastoral studies, and catechetics.

<sup>36</sup> Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Procter-Smith, “Lectionaries,” 89; Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.

<sup>38</sup> Fox, “Strange Omission,” 13; See Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.

<sup>39</sup> See Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.

Since the promulgation of the lectionary, feminist studies have developed significantly. In the apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, of August 15, 1988, Pope John Paul II acknowledged the irreplaceable role of women in the history of salvation.<sup>40</sup> The renewed lectionary could give the inspiration to explain the development of the understanding of the dignity of women and their indispensable role in society.

## Conclusions

Summing up, the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is, for most Christians, the main or even the only one moment in which they come into contact with the word of God, which is taken from the lectionary. This lectionary used in the Roman liturgy is not a perfect book, but it still remains a wonderful work of the liturgical and doxological hermeneutic of the Bible. It means that the reading from the lectionary is part of the liturgical event of praise.<sup>41</sup> The Introduction to the lectionary states: “The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God’s word and at the table of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy.”<sup>42</sup>

They both form but one single act of divine worship, which “offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God’s creatures the fullness of redemption.”<sup>43</sup> Even though the partial renewal of the lectionary would be desired, this liturgical book, as it is, remains a treasure of the Roman Church, solid spiritual nourishment, and an inspiring source for preaching.

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<sup>40</sup> See John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 27.

<sup>41</sup> See Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 138; Waznak, *Introduction*, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 10.

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