



Cork Scripture Group

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp for my steps and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105

The Lectionary and the Word of God

For many Christians, our primary encounter with the Sacred Scriptures is often through hearing the Word of God proclaimed in the readings that are part of our public prayer and worship. The Lectionary is the name given to the collection of biblical readings proclaimed at Mass, arranged in order of the liturgical year. The current Lectionary was established in 1981 and the English translation of the bible used during that time has been the *Jerusalem Bible*, first published in 1966, and *The Grail Psalms*, published in 1963.

Proposed change to the Lectionary in Ireland

The Irish Bishops' Conference, like many other English-speaking Conferences, is currently considering changing the translation of the Bible used in the Lectionary. The Irish bishops are considering using the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible*, as the basis for a new edition of the Lectionary for Mass in Ireland. They are asking us to express our opinion on this proposal. The choice of biblical readings will remain the same.

We hope that these short background notes and sample texts, which compare the current Lectionary and the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible*, will assist your understanding of what such a change would involve. We also hope that they will help you to formulate your views and encourage you to take part in the consultative process.

Translation and the Bible

The original manuscripts which today collectively form the Christian Bible were written in three languages: Hebrew and Aramaic for the Hebrew Bible, which we commonly refer to as the Old Testament, and Greek for the New Testament.

Even before the Christian era, translation has always been part of the history of the Sacred Scriptures. After the conquests of Alexander the Great [333 BCE], most of the ancient world spoke Greek. In time, Jews living outside of Palestine could no longer read Hebrew, so the Hebrew texts were translated into Greek. This version was called the *Septuagint*. It is frequently cited in the New Testament and remained the most widely read translation of the Old Testament among Christians for centuries.

In the fourth century CE, Saint Jerome translated the entire Bible into Latin, partly drawing on the Hebrew texts and on the Septuagint, since by that time Latin had replaced Greek as the common language in the Western half of the Roman Empire. Jerome's translation into Latin was called the *Vulgate* and became the standard Bible used by Western Christianity for over a thousand years or more.

Translation of the Bible into English

In the centuries before the Protestant Reformation there were several attempts to translate the Bible into English from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, but these were condemned by the Church in the West, which forbade the use of the Bible in any language apart from Latin. Since the Reformation, the *King James Version* [1611], together with subsequent revisions, continues to be the principal translation used within Protestant Churches. In the Catholic Church, the *Douay-Rheims Bible* [1610], based on Jerome's Vulgate, remained the only approved English translation until modern times.

By the nineteenth century CE, the discovery of ancient documents and artifacts helped scholars to better understand the original biblical languages and therefore produce more accurate translations. In recent years, the most commonly used English translations (*NRSV*, *NIV* and the different editions of the *Jerusalem Bible*) have all been translated from the original biblical languages.

In 1943, Pope Pius XII wrote an encyclical entitled *Divino Afflante Spiritu* which encouraged Catholic biblical scholars to use all the best methods and scholarship to produce new translations of the Bible from the best Hebrew and Greek texts available. The Second Vatican Council continued this direction and encouraged all Catholics to study the Bible and promoted the use of the vernacular in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of Mass.

New translations continue to be required to reflect the fresh insights which are gained from analysis of archaeological and other discoveries and from new methods of study. In their proposal for change, the Irish bishops highlight the "new understandings in relation to fidelity to the texts in their original languages" and also "developments in the English language over the last fifty years".

Considerations in translating Biblical texts

When translating the Sacred Scriptures from one language into another there are a number of considerations that the translator must take into account. Among the most important criteria applied are the following:

- + Accuracy
- + Readability
- + Suitability for Proclamation
- + Inclusivity.

Different translations will vary in the emphasis and significance they give to each of the above criteria.

Accurate:

All translations seek to faithfully and accurately translate the Sacred Scriptures into the language of the reader. Generally speaking, for English Bibles, there are two dominant translation methodologies: formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence.

In formal-equivalence translations, translators attempt to translate each word in the original language into an equivalent English word. These translations are generally considered more “literal” as they try to stay as close as possible to the original in vocabulary, structure, and grammar.

In dynamic-equivalence translations, translators attempt to translate the message/meaning of the original-language texts into an equivalent English word or expression. These translations are generally less literal on a word-for-word basis but still seek to respect and transmit the meaning of the original-language texts.

Having said all that, in actuality, all translations incorporate elements of both methods.

Readable:

A good translation, however, must be readable as well as accurate so that its message and its meaning can be readily understood by the reader or listener.

Suitable for proclamation:

The translation should be suitable for proclamation within prayer and liturgy so that its meaning can be easily conveyed and understood.

Inclusive:

Hebrew and Greek both use masculine generics, linguistic forms that are used both for males specifically and generically in reference to mixed groups of males and females. This presents a challenge for translators who must consider whether current *English* masculine generics convey the same inclusive sense that their Hebrew and Greek counterparts once did. Do terms such as “men,” “sons,” “fathers,” and “brothers” convey the same inclusive sense to the modern reader that the original language did? Should more inclusive words such as “person,” “children,” “ancestors,” and “brothers and sisters” be used to better reflect the original sense of the passage.

A simple definition of a gender-inclusive translation is *a translation that seeks to avoid masculine terminology when the original author was referring to members of both sexes.*

Express your view!

We invite you to take time to compare the following comparative translations of well-known passages from the Bible. They are taken from the *Jerusalem Bible* [1966] and the Revised New Jerusalem Bible [2019] respectively. We encourage you to actively participate in the consultation about the proposed adoption of the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* translation for the new edition of the Lectionary in Ireland.

You can communicate your views directly to the Secretariat for Liturgy at liturgy@iecon.ie or we will be happy to include your feedback as part of our collated response on behalf of Cork Scripture Group. Thank you.

Feedback via the Cork Scripture Group

If you wish us to incorporate your opinion in our response, please complete our short **online** Lectionary Questionnaire, using the **link** which has been emailed to you, before **Monday, 10th May**. [For your information, the survey questions are listed below.]

Choice of the Revised New Jerusalem Bible

1. Having considered the sample passages and the reasons for change, are you in favour of using the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* for the new edition? [This question is compulsory.]
2. If you are in favour, please indicate on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 10 is most satisfied) the strength of your approval.

Translation criteria

Taking the four criteria mentioned, that the translator should take into account, please rank the *RNJB* on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 10 is the highest) with regard to each of them.

3. Accuracy
4. Readability
5. Suitability for Proclamation
6. Inclusivity

Alternative Layout

Please read 1 Peter 3:18-22 in its alternative layout (right-hand column).

7. Does the layout help you to proclaim it more easily?
8. Is it more readable?
9. Is it easier to understand when you are listening?

Sample Texts

These texts have been chosen at random as familiar texts which are read on Sundays. They reflect the full range of readings: First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading, and Gospel.

In the **left-hand column** is the reading taken from the **current Lectionary**. In the **right-hand column** is the same passage from the *Revised New Jerusalem Bible*.

CURRENT LECTIONARY	REVISED NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE
<p><i>Third Sunday of Lent, Year C</i></p> <p>First Reading</p> <p>Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15</p> <p>Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burnt up. 'I must go and look at this strange sight,' Moses said 'and see why the bush is not burnt.' Now the Lord saw him go forward to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush. 'Moses, Moses!' he said. 'Here I am' he answered. 'Come no nearer' he said. 'Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,' he said, 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God.</p> <p>And the Lord said, 'I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal</p>	<p><i>Third Sunday of Lent, Year C</i></p> <p>First Reading</p> <p>Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15</p> <p>Moses was looking after the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led it to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame blazing from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing, but the bush was not being burnt up. Moses said, 'I must go over and see this strange sight, and why the bush is not being burnt up.' When the LORD saw him going over to look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, saying, 'Moses, Moses!' He answered, 'Here I am!' Then he said, 'Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses covered his face, for he was afraid to look at God.</p> <p>Then the LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help</p>

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to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow.'

Then Moses said to God, 'I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you". But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?' And God said to Moses, 'I Am who I Am. This' he added 'is what you say to the sons of Israel: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.'

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because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land, to a land rich and broad, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Moses then said to God, 'Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you," and they say to me, "What is his name?", what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And he said, 'This is what you are to say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you."' God further said to Moses, 'You are to tell the Israelites, "The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for all time, and this is my title for all generations.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Year A

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 22:1-3, 5-6. R/ v.1

R/ The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.

2. Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.
He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Year A

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 23:1-3, 5-6. R/ v.1

R/ The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.

2. Near restful waters he leads me;
he revives my soul.
He guides me along the right path,
for the sake of his name.

<p>CURRENT LECTIONARY</p> <p>3. You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.</p> <p>4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell forever and ever.</p>	<p>REVISED NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE</p> <p>3. You have prepared a table before me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.</p> <p>4. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. In the LORD's own house shall I dwell for the length of days unending.</p>
<p><i>Pentecost Sunday</i></p> <p>Second Reading</p> <p>Acts 2:1-11</p> <p>When Pentecost day came round, the apostles had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech. Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely' they said 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and</p>	<p><i>Pentecost Sunday</i></p> <p>Second Reading</p> <p>Acts 2:1-11</p> <p>When Pentecost day had come, they were all together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing wind, filling the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.</p> <p>Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, and they were bewildered because each one heard them speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and</p>

<p>CURRENT LECTIONARY</p> <p>Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.’</p>	<p>REVISED NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE</p> <p>Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, visitors from Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs, we hear them speaking in our own language about the marvels of God.’</p>
<p><i>Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C</i></p> <p>Second Reading</p> <p>1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13</p> <p>Be ambitious for the higher gifts. And I am going to show you a way that is better than any of them.</p> <p>If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fulness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever.</p> <p>Love is always patient and kind: it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.</p>	<p><i>Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C</i></p> <p>Second Reading</p> <p>1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13</p> <p>Be eager for the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.</p> <p>If I speak in the tongues of human beings and of angels but do not have love, I have become a sounding bronze or a cymbal clashing. If I have the power of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I distribute all my possessions, and if I hand over my body to be burnt, but do not have love, I gain nothing.</p> <p>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not jealous; love is not boastful, or puffed up or rude; it does not insist on its rights, it does not take offence, it does not plan evil, it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It puts up with everything, it believes everything, it hopes everything, endures everything.</p>

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Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue for ever; and knowledge – for this, too, the time will come when it must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known.

In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

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Love never falls away. If there are prophecies, they will become superfluous; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will become superfluous; for we know only in part and we prophesy only in part, but once perfection comes, the partial will be superfluous. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child. When I became a man, I put aside the things of childhood, for now we see in a mirror, confusedly, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know only partially, then I shall know fully, just as I am fully known. Now faith, hope and love abide, the three of them, but the greatest of them is love.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B

**Gospel
Luke 1:26-38**

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, ‘Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son,

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B

**Gospel
Luke 1:26-38**

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, full of grace! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and pondered what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. Look! You will conceive in your womb and bear a son,

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and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

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and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' In answer the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And see, your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she who was said to be barren is now in her sixth month, *for nothing is impossible to God.*' Mary said, 'Here I am, the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

*Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time,
Year B*

Gospel**John 6:24-35**

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered:

'I tell you most solemnly,
you are not looking for me
because you have seen the signs
but because you had all the bread you
wanted to eat.

Do not work for food that cannot last,

*Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time,
Year B*

Gospel**John 6:24-35**

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats themselves and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus.

Finding him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?' Jesus answered:

'Amen, Amen I say to you,
you are looking for me not because you
saw the signs,
but because you ate your fill of the
bread.

Do not work for food that corrupts,

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but work for food that endures to eternal life,
the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you,
for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.'

Then they said to him, 'What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?' Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent.' So they said, 'What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

Jesus answered:

'I tell you most solemnly,
it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven,
it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven,
the true bread;
for the bread of God
is that which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world.'

'Sir,' they said, 'give us that bread always.' Jesus answered:

'I am the bread of life.
He who comes to me will never be hungry;
he who believes in me will never thirst.'

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but work for food that endures for eternal life,
which the Son of man will give you,
for on him God the Father has set his seal.'

Then they said to him, 'What should we do to perform the works of God?'

Jesus answered and said to them,

'This is the work of God, that you should believe in the one he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign will you do, that we may see and believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert, as it is written, *Bread from heaven he gave them to eat.*'

Jesus said to them:

'Amen, Amen I say to you,
it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven,
it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven,
for the bread of God
is the bread which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world.'

They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus answered them:

'I am the bread of life.
No one who comes to me will ever be hungry;
No one who believes in me will ever be thirsty.'

Alternative layouts for a sample Revised New Jerusalem Bible passage

The right-hand column illustrates how a passage can be laid out in sense lines to assist the reader.

First Sunday of Lent, Year B: Second Reading	
<p>1 Peter 3:18-22 (RNJB)</p> <p>Christ himself suffered once and for all for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to lead you to God. He was put to death in the body; he was raised to life in the spirit, in which he also went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison. They had refused to believe long ago, while God patiently waited, in the days of Noah when the ark was being built, in which only a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water. Baptism which this prefigured now saves you, not the removal of physical dirt but the pledge to God of a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having entered heaven with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.</p>	<p>1 Peter 3:18-22 (RNJB)</p> <p>Christ himself suffered once and for all for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to lead you to God. He was put to death in the body; he was raised to life in the spirit, in which he also went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison. They had refused to believe long ago, while God patiently waited, in the days of Noah when the ark was being built, in which only a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water. Baptism which this prefigured now saves you, not the removal of physical dirt but the pledge to God of a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having entered heaven with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.</p>