

Kyrie (Sings)
R4

ANGELUS.

The celebration, at the beginning of this week, of the feast of Our Lord's Baptism, marked the octave day of the Epiphany, and the end of the Christmas season in the Church's year. The next special season we'll be keeping is Lent, which begins off this year with the 1st Sun. of Lent, in the middle of next month. And Wednesday of course comes just before that; but, in the revised calendar now in use, all those peculiar Sundays with the strange names, Septuagesima and so on, have disappeared. They were a kind of run-up to the actual, traditional, 40 days of Lent, stretching it out beforehand, so to speak, to reach the biblical number 70. But it's much clearer now. Meanwhile, we have the first 5 ^{weeks} Sundays of the ordinary cycle of the year. This means the scripture readings will be in accordance with the 3-yr pattern now established which ^{allows} ~~allows~~ for most of the N.T. being read at ~~the~~ Sunday Mass every three years. For this year, the gospel to be read through continuously (apart from occasional omissions) is St Mark's. It's the shortest of the 4 gospels, and at least partly because it doesn't so easily stretch over all the required Sundays, you'll be hearing some sections of St John's gospel as well, outside the seasons of Lent and Easter. Where suitable, ^{even} ~~also~~ in these special seasons as well as Advent-Christmas, the gospel for the year is also used. This new organisation of the Sunday gospel readings for Mass is intended to encourage a closer contact with the scripture as a whole, and a deeper understanding. So, if you're wanting to do

some study of the gospels for yourself, why not take St Mark this year so that your study doesn't remain an intellectual occupation only but will lead to and from prayer, in closeness to Christ, as the author intended. The same pattern of semi-continuous reading is also observed for the 2nd of the three passages of scripture prescribed for the Sundays of the year, this time for other parts of the N.T. This year's schedule lets us hear St Paul's first and second letters to the Church at Corinth, then his letter to the Ephesians, and around mid-autumn the letter of St James, and finally, leading up to next Advent, the letter to the Hebrews. There is the same opportunity, or occasion, in this to do one's own reading or study in parallel with the liturgy. Doing this wd. be an excellent way of preparing for Sunday Mass, as well as learning to know and understand the word of God better, in the context of Christian life and worship in which God's word is addressed to us. With this pattern in the Sunday readings, of course there isn't any intended connection between the gospel and the N.T. reading, except s'times incidentally. It's the first, O.T. passage which has been chosen for ^{its} connection with the gospel or NT, and the light it throws on it. The purpose here is to provide a small opportunity for the ordinary Christian to make at least some brief acquaintance with the O.T. which is equally the Word of God, given its full significance in the Person and Work of Christ. And after all that, a prayer in music now: let's listen to the beginning of the Gloria by Francis Poulenc, first performed in January 1961:

Gloria - Poulenc
RS 183

MUSIC

PRAYERS

What I was saying a few moments ago was by way of introduction to some thoughts on the scripture readings for next Sunday's Mass, the 2nd after Epiphany. As it happens, the gospel is not from St Mark, but one of the few insertions from St John's gospel. The other N.T. piece is from the 6th ch. of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians; and the O.T., chosen for its link with St John's account of the calling of the Apostles, is the fine story from the 1st bk of Samuel about how Samuel received God's call to His service. Samuel heard God calling him, only he didn't know it was the voice of the Lord - he thought it was his master Eli, and twice he went to Eli to answer the call he'd heard. Then Eli understood what was happening, that it was God who was calling, only Samuel, in the words of the Bible "had as yet no knowledge of the Lord and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him." Eli told Samuel what to do if he heard the voice again; "when Samuel did, he used that phrase that has passed into many Christian prayer - 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening'. St John in his gospel gives a picture of a much more immediate response on the part of Our Lord's first disciples. When they first saw Him, they followed Him, and stayed with Him the rest of that day. It was the person of Christ they responded to, the word of God made man, though they didn't at that stage realise all that this meant. There is instruction for our faith in these two accounts of people responding to God's initiatives, for Faith is a response to God who calls all of us to be His people. S'times, like Samuel, it isn't immediately clear who it is who's calling; but once you know it is the word of God you're listening to, or the person of Christ that you meet, your Christian reaction should be to pray "Speak Lord yr. servant is listening", and to go - live with Christ.