DO WE SHARE A BOOK? THE SUNDAY LECTIONARY AND JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the role that the Sunday Lectionary, revised after Vatican II, plays in the Catholic Church’s presentation of Jews and Judaism. The presentation of Jews and Judaism in the current Lectionary is clearly a vast improvement over what preceded it. However, there is still much work to be done in order to bring the Lectionary in line with official Catholic teachings on the Old Testament and the Jews. The recent document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (2001), provides a new and authoritative impetus to reconsider the selection of Old Testament texts and their relationship to Gospel texts in the Lectionary. The article argues that continued Lectionary reform, specifically with regard to the Old Testament lections, would improve Jewish-Christian relations in the long term.

KEYWORDS
lectionary; scripture; old testament

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Christians inherited this form from the Jewish synagogue, where regular readings from the Torah and the prophets were heard. As a faithful Jew, Jesus participated in such readings. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah." By the middle of the second century, Christians at worship read not only the early Jewish scriptures, which we now call the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures, but also the "memoirs of the apostles" of Jesus, which eventually became the New, or Christian Testament. The lectionary is not a chronological approach to reading the Bible, nor is it a book-by-book approach. Each week the scripture readings are closely linked to the season of the Church's life cycle, its liturgical calendar. The Sunday Lectionary: Ritual Word, Paschal Shape by Normand Bonneau. I grew up in Lutheran congregations, and most every Sunday I would listen and read along as the pastor or a lector read one or more selected verses from the Bible. I learned that oftentimes these readings were pre-selected, and not by the pastor or lector. I felt like I was pretty smart, knowing that much about the readings that were being shared on Sunday morning. And I felt pretty cocky knowing that the readings were related to the liturgical season, so that the particular readings on any given Sunday morning related to the larger progression of the church year, the particular liturgical season we happened to be in (Advent, Lent, etc.), and to greater or lesser degrees, to the other readings that particular morning. Is it necessary to use the Lectionary with the Christian Year? Will it help us if we do? Will we forfeit some benefits if we don't? And what is the Revised Common Lectionary? Perhaps your members are asking these questions and they are coupled with the fact that you have never used it, or are not quite sure what it is. Using the Lectionary and including multiple scripture readings in each worship service makes it very clear to the worshipers that we take the Bible very seriously. On the basis of such considerations, we might think that all churches would follow the Common Lectionary carefully. Such, however, is not the case. While some use the Lectionary because it has been their custom for years, other do not for the very same reason – it has been their custom not to do so.