

T H E
L I T U R G I C A L
C A L E N D A R :
T H E S E A S O N S
A N D Y E A R S
U N F O L D

Particularly dramatic in the re-formulation of Scripture undertaken by the interdenominational scholars of the Second Vatican Council was the scheduling of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John into a cycle where each year would focus on essentially one writer's account of Jesus' life, with some "sprinkling" of John's account in each.

Assigned in the Cycle as Year A- Matthew, Year B, Mark, and Year C, Luke, each year's readings take on a different twist, a different cast, reflecting the personality and experience of the year's primary writer.

Matthew's Gospel, the longest and with the most direct account of Jesus' teaching, shows the perspective of the ex-tax-collector, originally despised by Jew and Gentile alike. A Jew, living in Israel who, probably in his own dying years, saw the destruction of Jerusalem, and the clear division between the Jewish sect which believed in Jesus

as the Messiah, and the more traditional majority which did not.

An original disciple and eyewitness to the experience of Jesus, Matthew focuses on two main themes: The fulfillment of Hebrew scripture in the person of Jesus, and, from that, the New Mission of Jesus as Messiah.

Matthew teaches in the Rabbinic tradition, using the technique of midrash, scholarly biblical analysis, to make clear his case for the Jewish Covenant being brought to fulfillment in Jesus.

Mark's Gospel, the shortest, the earliest written account (penned around the year 60 of the Common Era, some 20 years before Matthew and Luke's), and the source from which Matthew and Luke clearly drew), is written from Rome, to Romans, former pagans who made up a church bitterly persecuted by the state.

His perspective is of Jesus as spiritual conqueror, vanquisher of evil, healer of ills.

Speaking and writing in Aramaic, Latin and Greek, Mark stresses the Universal Grace of God, in contrast to Matthew's focus on the Covental Bond between God and the people

of Israel.

A traveling companion of Paul, born Saul, a persecutor of Christians-turned-founding missionary-and-luminary of this new faith who traveled from Jerusalem to the distant lands of Persia, Mark addressed and reached an audience much broader than that of Matthew.

Luke, writes his account as a gentile, a Syrian physician. By culture a Greek, he lives in, and speaks to, the Hellenistic world, bringing the perspective of an educated, accomplished man who sees himself as a citizen of a broad and culturally diverse Universe.

His account of Jesus' life is the most complete, and, with the most detail. As a healer, Luke's reportage stresses the reconciliatory nature of Jesus' ministry and teaching. He reminds readers of Jesus' call to mercy, forgiveness, generosity, inclusivity.

Though the theme of justice is central in all the Gospels, Luke's account is the strongest in its condemnation of injustice, inequity, greed, and, the marginalization of women.

These three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark

