

READING SAINT MATTHEW'S GOSPEL AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME



READING SACRED SCRIPTURE

Just recently the Holy Father Pope Benedict has written a short report resulting from a meeting in Rome on the Catholic emphasis on the importance of Scripture. He mentions its use in the liturgy especially the celebration of Mass and Reconciliation and the need for thorough and ongoing training of lay men and women readers, in the skills of proclamation and in their understanding and familiarity with the scriptures. Furthermore he stresses the need for all the faithful to use the scriptures in their personal prayers and to study the scriptures diligently. There is also an admonition to all the clergy in their homilies and in scripture study programmes in parishes to teach a familiarity and an authentic understanding of the bible.

As we begin a new season of Advent with its attendant start of a new sequence of Gospel readings for the year we might take some time to look a little more closely once again at Matthew's gospel which we will be reading throughout the year. This is not so that we study an ancient text purely as an academic study but that we might be nourished by it and use it to inform our way of living. In other words not only to see what it was saying to those people who heard it for the first time but what does it say to us today.

With this in mind then let's look at the overall structure of Matthew's gospel and keep this outline as a guide for use during the year as we move through the gospel during our Liturgy of the Word at Mass.

Date: It was written around the year 90 give or take a decade.

Author: A Greek speaker who also knew Aramaic and Hebrew who was not an eye-witness of Jesus' ministry. He drew on Mark's gospel and on other sayings and material available at the time of writing.

Region involved: Most probably he was writing for the people around Antioch where he probably lived.

There is a clear structure to the gospel and it has been suggested by some scholars that it is patterned on the first five books of the Bible that are traditionally held to be by Moses with an introduction and a climax.

Division of Gospel

1:1 – 2:23	Introduction: Origin and Infancy of Jesus
3:1 – 7:29	Part 1: Proclamation of the Kingdom
8:1 – 10:42	Part 2: Ministry and Mission in Galilee
11:1 – 13:52	Part 3: Questioning of and opposition to Jesus
13:53 – 18:35	Part 4: Nature of Christ and the Church
19:1 – 25:46	Part 5: Journey to and Ministry in Jerusalem
26:1 – 28:20	Climax: Passion, Death and Resurrection

