

THE PROCLAMATION (AND READINGS) (See page 409, 460-461, 480)

The readings are the beginning of the hard work of worshipping. The Lutherans have coined the phrase 'breaking open the word' for our use of them. We hear from (usually, though not, sadly in the Easter season) the Hebrew scriptures, recite a psalm, hear from the early Christian epistles, and then, sometimes with a little more ceremonial, from the Jesus-stories, the Gospels. We then attempt to extrapolate some meaning, a 'so what' for us today, a sermon.

Usually a theme will run through the readings, as well as the Sentence and Collect. I'm not personally a fan of the so-called 'related' readings, as I feel the 'continuous' give us a broader journey through the scriptures, force us at least to some of the back waters and cul-de-sacs of the encounters between God and the People of God. Still: I wouldn't take a bullet for my opinion at that point!

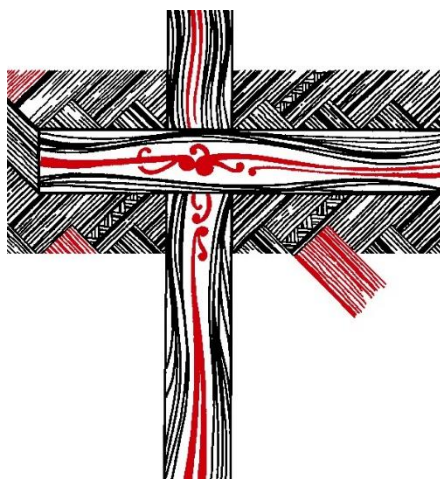
It is, though, important to have the full quota of readings: we are connected in faith with the whole story of God's people, Hebrew and Christian alike. It is an increasing Anglican laziness to throw out the readings, so only one or two,

rather than four, are used.

In particular, the psalms take us through the entire gamut of human responses to being touched by God in God's crazy world. We select feelings, edit out the unpleasanties, at great peril, even in worship: we bring the whole of our humanity to God, and how dare we edit

out the naughty, nasty bits when so many people in God's world are crippled by naughty and nasty? The more deeply our story is rooted into the story of our forebears the less likely we are to blow down in the next storm.

The Gospel, traditionally read by the deacon, should be read from the centre of the church, representing the coming of the Word-made-flesh into the centre of humankind, God made flesh who dwelt amongst us. It is a weekly re-enactment of the Christmas drama. Technically it should be read at 'the intersection of the sacramental and kerygmatic axes' (but don't worry too much, yet, about that, for I'll reveal all, soon).



Diocese of Dunedin

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