

Differences between the ESV-CE Lectionary and the ESV-CE New Testament

At the start of Advent 2024, Catholics in England, Scotland, and Wales heard a different translation of the Bible proclaimed at Mass for the first time in 54 years. Since 1970, their Lectionary has been using the Jerusalem Bible and the Grail Psalms. Considering the Jerusalem Bible is nearly 60 years old now and has undergone 2 major revisions since its release, it was time to turn the page and close that chapter in British Lectionary history. The new Lectionary is based on the English Standard Version, Catholic Edition (ESV-CE) and the Abbey Psalms, and it received Vatican approval in July 2023.

To the delight of many, some changes were made to the ESV-CE text for the Lectionary. Most notably, Gabriel the Archangel's greeting to Mary in Luke 1:28 was changed from "Greetings, O highly favored one" to "Hail, full of grace". They also chose to stay more in line with tradition by changing "overseer" to "bishop" in Philippians, Timothy, and Titus.

These welcomed changes left myself and others wondering: what other changes were made? This was not an easy question to answer. No list of changes is available and there is no "ESV-CE Lectionary edition" Bible that one can buy or access online. The task of finding out what changes were made to the ESV-CE in the Lectionary requires comparing each Biblical text for the 3-year readings cycle and Special Feasts with those same texts in the ESV-CE. Seeing no other option, that is what I decided to do.

I chose the New Testament to get this project underway. I used the Universalis app to access all of the Lectionary texts digitally. Then I used ChatGPT-5 Plus in "thinking" mode to compare every reading in the Lectionary with the same texts in the ESV. Finally, I manually cross-referenced each difference with the ESV-CE.

The vast majority of the changes were adaptations into British spelling and punctuation. The other major source of changes were editorial introductions and necessary clarifiers. For example, Hebrews 13:15 reads: "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God...", but since this is the start of a reading in the Lectionary, it reads: "Brothers and sisters: Through Jesus then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God...". The "Brothers and sisters:" is the editorial intro, and changing "him" to "Jesus" is the editorial clarifier. I did not include any of these edits in my list of changes.

Looking at the results for the New Testament, my overall impression is that the changes are minimal. I count only 73 changes that aren't due to editorial intros and clarifiers, changes in British spelling and vocabulary, punctuation changes, capitalizations, and broader use of

gender-inclusive language. From a Catholic perspective, the two major changes are Gabriel's greeting to Mary and the use of "bishop" instead of "overseer".

Looking at the rest of the differences, there are a few things that stand out. There are three places where the Lectionary went with a different variant source text compared with the ESV-CE:

- **Mark 1:4** - The Lectionary made a change to: "John *the Baptist* appeared in the wilderness..." The ESV-CE has: "John appeared, baptising in the wilderness..." The NABRE, NCB, RSV-2CE, RNJB, NRSVue, and the New Vulgate all use the same variant as the Lectionary, so the ESV-CE is on a bit of an island there.
- **Mark 11:26** - The Lectionary includes this verse: "*But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*". This is the opposite of the situation for Mark 1:4. This time, the Lectionary is on an island because none of the other translations listed previously include this verse. It is a bit of a mute point because this is the same verse as Matthew 6:15, which they all have. The earliest and best New Testament manuscripts do not contain this verse in Mark, so it is thought to be a later addition from Matthew 6:15.
- **John 1:18** - The Lectionary made a change to: "No one has ever seen God; the only *begotten* God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." The ESV-CE has: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." This is a tricky one to explain because there are 3 variant source texts, and the ESV 2025 update no longer matches the ESV-CE because it revised that verse to match the Lectionary. The other translations in agreement with the Lectionary, in addition to the ESV 2025 update, are the NABRE, NCB, NRSVue, and the New Vulgate. The RNJB and the RSV-2CE both go with a different variant than the ESV-CE and read: "the only-begotten Son". In short, the Lectionary uses the more common variant and is now in agreement with the New Vulgate.

There are also two verses where the Lectionary cuts out a section of the verse, but there doesn't appear to be any textual variants or any other translations that have these sections cut out. I don't have a good explanation why these edits were made:

- **James 5:12** - Here is this verse in the ESV-CE with the Lectionary edit shown crossed out: "But above all, my brothers [and sisters], do not swear, ~~either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath~~, but let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no..."
- **Revelation 11:8** - Here is this verse in the ESV-CE with the Lectionary edit shown crossed out: "and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city ~~that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt~~, where their Lord was crucified"

Having a list of differences between the ESV-CE and the ESV-CE Lectionary will help settle any doubt that what you are reading in your Bible at home might be different from what you are hearing proclaimed from the pulpit. People can now add footnotes to their ESV-CE Bible for Luke 1:28, Mark 1:4, John 1:18, or any other place where they want to include the Lectionary text. Though there may never be a printed ESV-CE Lectionary Bible, you can now use this list to create your own.

*Changes in the ESV-CE Lectionary are shown in **red** for additions and **—** for subtractions

Matthew

7:16 Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from ~~thistles~~ **thorn bushes**

10:29 Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father **knowing**

13:48 sorted the good into ~~containers~~ **vessels**

14:35 they sent **word** around to all that region

19:6 let ~~not man~~ **no man** separate

20:8 the owner of the vineyard said to his ~~foreman~~ **steward**

26:17 Where ~~will~~ **would** you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?

26:22 began to say to him one after another, “~~Is it~~ **Not** I, Lord?”

26:25 Judas, who would betray him, answered, “~~Is it~~ **Not** I, Rabbi?”

26:67 Then they ~~spit~~ **spat** in his face and struck him

27:30 And they ~~spit~~ **spat** on him

Mark

1:4 John **the Baptist** appeared, ~~baptizing~~ in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

2:3,4,5,9,10 ~~paralytic~~ **paralysed man**

8:23 when he had ~~spit~~ **spat** on his eyes

10:9 What therefore God has joined together, let ~~not man~~ **no one** separate

11:26 **But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses**

12:41 watched the people putting money into the ~~treasury~~ **offering box**

Luke

1:28 ~~“Greetings, O highly favored one~~ Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!

9:11 those who ~~had need of~~ needed healing

9:14 And he said to his disciples, ~~Have~~ Make them sit down...”

9:15 and ~~had~~ made them all sit down

14:9 then you, ~~will begin~~ with shame, will ~~to~~ take the lowest place

14:18,19 Please ~~have~~ excuse me ~~excused~~

16:11 If then you have not been faithful ~~in~~ with the unrighteous wealth

16:12 And if you have not been faithful ~~in~~ with that which is another's

16:26 so that those who would pass from here to you may not ~~be able~~ do so

19:8 Behold, Lord, ~~the~~ half of my goods I give to the poor

24:42 a piece of ~~broiled~~ grilled fish

John

1:14 glory as of the ~~only Son~~ Begotten from the Father

1:18 the only begotten God, who is at the Father's side

3:3,7 born ~~again~~ anew

3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son

3:18 he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God

6:2 the signs he was doing ~~on~~ for the sick

6:9 has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are ~~they~~ these for so many

8:4 has been caught in ~~the act of~~ adultery

9:6 he ~~spit~~ spat on the ground

11:39 there will be an ~~odor~~ smell

13:23 reclining at table at ~~the side of~~ Jesus's side

14:14 If you ask me ~~for~~ anything in my name, I will do it

19:17 the place called The Place of ~~a~~ the Skull

20:7 and the face cloth, which had been on ~~the head of~~ Jesus's head

Acts

2:46 they ~~received~~ **shared** their food

7:44 just as ~~he~~ **God** who spoke to Moses directed him

10:40 God raised him on the third day and ~~made~~ **caused** him to appear

Romans

none

1 Corinthians

5:1 that is not tolerated even among **the** Gentiles

7:34 And the unmarried **woman** or virgin ~~woman~~

15:37 what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare ~~kernel~~ **seed**, perhaps of wheat

2 Corinthians

4:5 ourselves as your servants for **the sake of** Jesus'-~~sake~~

4:11 being given over to death for **the sake of** Jesus'-~~sake~~

11:25 **for** a night and a day I was adrift at sea

Galatians

4:23 ~~But~~ **The** son of the slave was born

Ephesians

4:9 that he had also descended into the lower regions; **of** the earth?

Philippians

1:1 To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are ~~at~~ **in** Philippi, with the ~~overseers~~ **bishops** and deacons.

Colossians

1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. ~~Of~~ **About** this **hope** you have heard

1:6 wich has come to you. ~~as~~ **I** Indeed in the whole world

2:2 to reach all the riches of **the** full assurance

1 Thessalonians

4:15 For this we declare to you by ~~a~~ **the** word from the Lord

2 Thessalonians

none

1 Timothy

3:1 office of ~~overseer~~ **bishop**

3:2 ~~an overseer~~ **a bishop** must be above reproach

2 Timothy

4:8 the righteous judge, will award ~~to~~ me on that day

Titus

2:46 For ~~an overseer~~ **a bishop**, as God's steward, must be above reproach

Philamon

none

Hebrews

5:3 he is ~~obligated~~ **bound** to offer sacrifice

James

5:12 do not swear, ~~either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath,~~ but let your 'yes' be yes

1 Peter

3:7 since they are heirs ~~with you~~ of the grace of life

2 Peter

none

1 John

none

2 John

none

3 John

none

Jude

none

Revelation

2:3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for **the sake of** my name's ~~sake~~

11:8 the great city ~~that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt,~~ where their Lord was crucified

*Some additional differences not included above:

- The Lectionary capitalizes the following: the Apostles, the Twelve, the Temple, the Scriptures, the Treasury, our Place, this Holy Place, the Law, the Church, the Lord's Supper, Book of Life
- The Lectionary uses extra comas, and sometimes uses semicolons and colons when the ESV has comas and semicolons, and it will occasionally use comas instead of brackets
- The Lectionary uses "brothers and sisters" instead of "brothers" quite often, especially at the start of a reading from the Epistles
- The Lectionary spells out numbers where the ESV-CE uses numerical digits
- The Lectionary often adds editorial intros at the start of readings and slightly edits the text to aid context and flow

*The following changes are found throughout the text due to British vs American spelling and vocabulary. The ESV lectionary text is on the left:

- baptised → baptized
- marvelled → marveled
- marvelling → marveling
- paralysed → paralyzed
- signalled → signaled
- cancelled → canceled
- honour / honoured → honor / honored
- neighbour(s) → neighbor(s)
- labourer(s) → laborer(s)
- judgement → judgment
- towards → toward
- plough → plow
- fulfil → fulfill

- enquired → inquired
- worshipped → worshiped
- ploughing → plowing
- afterwards → afterward
- sulphur → sulfur
- further → farther
- towards → toward
- recognised → recognized
- round → around
- litre(s) → gallon(s)
- Saviour → Savior
- lake → sea
- offence → offense
- practises → practices
- Sion → Zion
- kilograms → pounds
- meters → yards
- cock → rooster
- travelling → traveling
- criticised → criticized
- clamour → clamor
- quarrelling → quarreling

- armour → armor
- Alleluia → Hallelujah
- corn → grain
- smouldering → smoldering
- unshrunk → unshrunk
- turtle-doves → turtledoves
- home town → hometown
- thorn bushes → thornbushes
- market-place → marketplace
- money bags → moneybags
- vine dresser → vinedresser
- for ever → forever
- for evermore → forevermore
- fist-fruits → firstfruits