

GUIDELINES FOR LECTORS

Christ is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the church.

Second Vatican Council, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #7

When the Scriptures are read in church, God Himself is speaking to His people, and Christ, present in His own word, is proclaiming the gospel. The reading of God's word must therefore be listened to by all with reverence. They make up a principal element of the liturgy.

— *General Instruction on the Roman Missal, #29*

QUALIFICATIONS

- ♦ A Catholic who attends Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- ♦ One who has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- ♦ One who contributes to the support of the church and makes his or her Easter Duties.
- ♦ A person of lively faith and good morals, striving to live a truly Christian life.
- ♦ One who's willing to commit to this ministry even though it's a voluntary one.
- ♦ At times, one may go through a period of uncertainty as to one's relationship with the Church. If that occurs, it may be best to take some time off from this ministry.

BEFORE MASS

1. If you'll be unable to read when assigned, please call other lectors to find a substitute. Call the rectory as a last resort to notify the priest.
2. Familiarize yourself with the readings and the responsorial psalm ahead of time, being mindful of the tips found in the *Workbook for Lectors*.
3. Lectors should arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass begins. Familiarize yourself with the Mass intentions, the announcements, and the General Intercessions.
4. With regard to proper pronunciation of words in the readings, refer to the *Workbook for Lectors*, the pronunciation guide in the sacristy, or consult the priest.
5. Read the Mass intentions and announcements 5 minutes before Mass begins, or as directed by the priest.
6. The lector should be in the sanctuary at the beginning of Mass and remain in the sanctuary through the General Intercessions.

THE MICROPHONE

The microphone is sensitive. Keep the tip of the microphone about 8-10 inches from your mouth. Any closer than that will distort the sound. Avoid speaking directly into it.

Before Mass begins, adjust the microphone so it's at the proper position for you. Avoid touching the tip of the microphone. For the General Intercessions, if someone has moved the microphone, adjust your position or the microphone's position before you begin.

Microphones don't mean that you should speak softer or softly. You'll probably have "competition" – babies crying, air conditioning noise, coughing, etc. Read above-normal in volume and allow the microphone to amplify that.

DURING MASS

The Entrance Antiphon is recited at the beginning of Mass, unless there's an Entrance Hymn (the lector's sheet will indicate that). Begin the Entrance Antiphon when the priest reaches his position in front of the altar. Don't say "The Entrance Antiphon." Simply begin it.

At the conclusion of the Introductory Rite, the priest and the congregation sit and the lector approaches the ambo. The lector should move in a deliberate and dignified manner.

The lector then announces the reading, in this way: "A reading from the..." *and not* "The first (or second) reading is a reading from..." If at all possible, read from the lectionary and not from the missalette.

The lector pauses briefly after announcing the reading and again at the end of the reading before saying "the Word of the Lord." The lector then steps back from the ambo and bows his or her head for 15-20 seconds (about the length of one "Hail Mary").

The lector then moves forward to the ambo for the Responsorial Psalm and introduces the antiphon. Don't say "Responsorial Psalm" to introduce it and don't read the antiphon along with the congregation.

After the Responsorial Psalm, the lector again steps back from the ambo as above. The procedure for the second reading is the same as for the first reading. After the second reading, the lector steps back again as above, then returns to his or her place in the sanctuary (the Alleluia Verse will be sung at all weekend Masses).

Approach the ambo when "We believe in the Holy Spirit..." is being said during the Profession of Faith. Face the priest until he has introduced the General Intercessions. Then read the petitions, pausing briefly between each petition. At the end of the petitions, face the priest until he concludes the Intercessions. Then you may return to your pew. There's no need to bow toward the altar when going to your pew, unless in returning to your pew you'll be crossing in front of the tabernacle.

NOTES ON PROCLAMATION

Consider the following as you prayerfully evaluate your effectiveness on a regular basis:

- ♦ *Do I assume a posture appropriate to the Mass and the readings?*
A posture of confidence will encourage the congregation to listen. Don't use your arms or hands for emphasis. Try to maintain eye contact with the congregation.
- ♦ *Do I move with dignity and grace?*
All movement should be deliberate, as it'll set the mood for your proclamation. Movement that's too slow or too fast will detract from your efforts.
- ♦ *Is my attitude one of awareness of the liturgical significance of the readings?*
Good preparation, pronunciation guides, and other materials will help to increase your awareness.
- ♦ *Do I show an insight into the meaning of the text?*
Look over the readings several times will help develop your insight.
- ♦ *Do I enunciate clearly, pronounce well, and pause where appropriate?*
Practice the readings out loud and listen to yourself. If you read too slow or too fast, you may lose the meaning of the text.
- ♦ *Are the pitch, texture, and volume of my voice appropriate?*
Vary the pitch and texture of your voice to help sustain the congregation's interest. You're telling the greatest story ever told!

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Dress: Men should wear dress slacks, shirts with collars, and dress shoes. Women should wear a blouse with pants or skirt, or a dress covering the shoulders and of acceptable length, and dress shoes. Shorts, t-shirts, low-cut pants, low-cut blouses, jeans, strapless tops, sleeveless shirts, sports shoes, jogging clothes, flip-flops, etc. aren't acceptable dress. The priest will use his discretion in this matter.

Pausing: Effective pausing is learning not to fear silence. The listeners need time to process the text. A well-executed pause is one of emphasizing a part of the text, either what has just been proclaimed or what's coming next.

Stage Fright: Your fear is the energetic desire to do well. Prepare well, then use the energy behind the fear. Practice not only makes perfect (or nearly so!), it also builds confidence.

Speed: Speak too fast, and the people won't understand what you're saying. Speak too slow, and they'll forget the first word of the sentence before you get to the last.

Last-Minute Substituting: There may be times when you may want to volunteer if the assigned lector doesn't show up. However, if you're not properly dressed to be in the sanctuary, it may be more appropriate not to volunteer. The priest will use his discretion in this matter.

Ministries: The various liturgical ministries should be clearly distinguished at Mass. The same person ministering in two different roles at the same Mass is discouraged, although sometimes this may be unavoidable.

Resources for Lectors:

Workbook for Lectors

<http://www.lectorprep.org>

<http://www.proclaimnet.net>

<http://liturgy.slu.edu>

<http://www.lectorworks.org>

Study God's Word in Scripture

Know His Word in your life.

Live in His Word in your life.

Grow in His Word through prayer and action.

Tell all people that His Word is life eternal.

A Lector's Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for calling me to be a lector. May I take this role seriously and prepare myself by studying the readings and by striving to be a better Catholic Christian. By my action of reading, I am the instrument through whom You become present to the people in Your Word, and through whom You impart Your teachings. Let nothing in my manner distract Your people or close their hearts to the action of Your Spirit. Cleanse my heart and mind and open my lips so that I may worthily proclaim Your holy Word. Amen.

(Revised: 02/26/13)