



St. Francis of Assisi Parish
Orland Park, Illinois

Lector Procedures

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Constitution document of Vatican II, describes the Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of our spiritual lives. It also teaches that God makes himself truly present during the Mass in the Eucharist and the spoken Word.

God's Presence in Communion and Proclamation

Eucharistic Ministers invite us to acknowledge the presence of God as they hold the host and speak the words "The Body of Christ". In the same way, Lectors invite the congregation to acknowledge God's presence in the Word by proclaiming "The Word of the Lord" at the conclusion of the readings.

To hear the Scriptures proclaimed is to hear the voice of God speaking – at that very moment – to the people gathered together for worship. Our ministry is wonderfully important; God's words become empowered for a congregation through the Lector. Some come to Mass carrying considerable pain, doubt or woundedness, in desperate need of God's healing Word. The language we use communicates much more than lessons or ideas - it imparts God's grace – Divine messages intended for God's people. We lend God our voice so that His sacred scripture can achieve its purpose.

Therefore, our profound privilege and responsibility is to proclaim the Word of God, not merely recite it! We do this by bringing life, joy and meaning to the texts we read each week.

All of us are called to a full and active participation in the liturgy. As Lectors, we must model this participation for the congregation by our joy, reverence, dress, preparation and close attention to the liturgy. Importantly, we must take part in all forms of spoken and sung prayer throughout the Mass.

The Lord God has given me a well trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them.

Isaiah 50:4

"When you answer the call to be a minister of the Word, you enter a deeper relationship with the Word... God's healing & strengthening Word goes forth to the ends of the earth, achieving the purpose for which God sent it."

- Aelred Rosser from "A Well Trained Tongue"

Mass Procedures

Microphone

We receive more feedback (no pun) on the effective use of the microphone than any other issue. Make a conscious effort to position it properly i.e. slightly above or below your mouth. As you pronounce words beginning or ending with “B’s” “P’s”, and “T’s”, we want to ensure the sound does not “pop” loudly through the speaker system. Listen for your voice coming off the back wall of the church. We have never received negative comments about a Lector reading too loudly!

Your entire reading must be heard in order to bring God’s strength and healing to our community.

Please be sure to fill the worship space with your voice

Prior to Mass

Arrive in the ministers’ sacristy 15 minutes prior to Mass, sign in and inform the priest that you are one of the Lectors.

If you are reading at the first Mass of the weekend (5:15 pm Saturday), you should find two copies of PETITIONS or the Universal Prayer in the sacristy. Read all information carefully. Names are spelled phonetically for easier pronunciation – ask the presider for pronunciation help, if needed. A former Associate Pastor once gave me some great advice about the reading of names at Mass. *“No matter what – just pronounce it with confidence – God knows who you are talking about.”*

Take ONE copy of the Petitions to the ambo and place it under the ambo between the Pillars or to the side of the ambo. The second copy is to remain in the sacristy for the Lectors’ preparation.

Note: Paperwork such as the Petitions or Announcements should not be carried into Mass during the procession

The first Lector to arrive should place the LECTONARY on the ambo with it open to the first reading.

Adjust the microphone and ensure it is on.

Opening Procession

Start by taking a Gather Hymnal from the ushers – full, active participation requires Lectors to sing! You should carry a hymnal in procession and use it for every song. Occasionally one Lector might be required to carry the Book of the Gospels if there is no Deacon. That Lector should place a hymnal in the pew prior to opening procession for their use during Mass.

Next, line up with the other ministers behind the baptismal font. As you face the altar, you should be positioned behind the servers and in front of the Deacon and Priest.

Book of the Gospels: If a Deacon is assisting at the Liturgy, he will carry the Book of Gospels. In the event that a Deacon is not present, one Lector will be required to carry the Book of Gospels. The book should be lifted upward above your head and prominently displayed while in procession.

(Most Cases) **If you do not carry the Book of Gospels** – Both Lectors approach the altar in procession. As you pass the first pew, simply **stop** and **bow**, then proceed to your seats.

(Rare Case) **If you do carry the Book of Gospels** – Both Lectors approach the altar in procession. Stop as you pass the first pew (*continue holding the Book - do not bow*). Wait for the other Lector to bow (that Lector should then proceed to his/her seat). While holding the Book in a prominent fashion, move to the back of the altar. Place the Book on the altar leaving enough space (~12 inches) between the edge of the altar and the Book so the priest has adequate room to venerate the altar.

Lectors should sit together in the first row of pews to the right of the servers.

Readings

At the appropriate time, each Lector should **approach the ambo with reverence**. Walk slowly with hands folded.

Beginning the Reading

Wait for the congregation to be seated, settled and attentive. Adjust the microphone.

Do not provide “introductions” to the readings such as “*Our first reading this morning is from the Book of...*” or “*Our second reading today is from the First Letter of St. Paul...*” Simply read the introduction/citation of the reading **as it appears in the Lectionary**.

Concluding the Reading

At the conclusion of each reading, a **prayerful pause** is required before saying “the Word of the Lord”

The intention is to allow our congregation a few moments to ponder the words you brought to them. Silence can be a rare commodity in our lives and if effectively used, it can be very beneficial for liturgies.

Please follow these steps: 1) take a step back from the ambo, 2) pause 5-10 seconds (do not rush this) and 3) motion toward the Lectionary with outstretched hands and proclaim “The Word of the Lord.”

Please watch this brief video to see how it’s done...

<http://youtu.be/VaKS1a6Xppc>

Second Reading

Lector II should wait to approach the ambo until the Cantor has completed the responsorial Psalm (between the First & Second readings) and has exited the ambo area.

At the conclusion of his/her reading, Lector II should close the Lectionary and place it to the LEFT on the lower level of the ambo. This allows room for the Book of the Gospels.

Universal Prayer (Petitions)

IMPORTANT: Lectors should *never add or subtract intentions* – particularly for the sick or deceased ***without the knowledge and consent of the presiding priest. No exceptions!***

Announce no one if the Mass intention listed is for “*The People of St. Francis*”.

After reading the final petition, turn and face the presiding priest. Remain at the ambo until the priest has finished the concluding prayer in order to avoid causing a distraction by walking in front of him. Return to your seat.

Parish Announcements

Announcements are read by the Presider. This is no longer a duty of the Lector.

Closing Procession

At the conclusion of Mass, pick up your hymnal and begin singing the recessional song. Stand at your pew and wait for the servers pass in front of you. As you follow them, move to the center aisle in line with the first row of pews and face the altar. Wait for the priest and Deacon to come and face the altar in front of you. Bow with the Presider and turn into the center of the aisle.

Finally, you should reverently process out of the church following the servers.

Neither book (Lectionary nor the Book of Gospels) is carried out during the closing procession. Simply carry and use your hymnal.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD – KEY POINTS

Before coming to your scheduled Mass, please take enough time to adequately prepare the readings.

Preparation includes reading the passage aloud and more than once. This is very important!

There is a need to not only let your mind become familiar with the ideas and words, but also to let the words "get around your tongue" as you practice the rhythm of the phrasing of the words. Otherwise even if you think you have prepared the reading, you will find yourself sometimes off-step in your verbal rhythm in the middle of a sentence – particularly in long run-on sentences.

Many of the sentences in the Pauline or other New Testament letters have to be **studied** and read very carefully and with a lot of emphasis in order for their meaning to be fully grasped by the congregation.

A Pronunciation Guide and brief explanation is given in the margin of the workbook. This is very helpful in understanding and communicating what you are proclaiming. **Speak distinctly and at a slightly slower than average pace.** The readings should not be rushed. **Voice inflection is important.** Try to capture the congregation's imagination along with their attention.

Eye contact is also very important. Looking up occasionally helps to hold the attention of those listening. Try to make eye contact with different sections of the church each time you look up. This helps people feel your reading is addressed to the entire congregation not simply the center section.

“Better to illuminate than merely shine... to deliver to others contemplated truths than merely to contemplate.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, OP

Dress Code

Since you are a very visible part of the liturgy, your posture, actions and appearance should always be dignified. Please follow these approved guidelines for dress:

“Business Formal” not “Business Casual”: "Business Formal" attire is defined at a minimum as: Men: (i) business suit with collared shirt and tie or (ii) slacks, sport coat with collared shirt and tie. Women: (i) business suit (pantsuit is acceptable); (ii) dress or (iii) blazer with collared shirt or sweater with skirt or tailored slacks.

Lending a Hand

It is always helpful to check and make sure *at least one* Lector is in attendance at each Mass you attend. You are not required to fill in as a *second* Lector (although, if that person does not show up, you should feel free to do so).

While the absence of both Lectors is relatively rare, it is important to make sure that our ministry is represented at every Mass. All of us have that responsibility.



Additional Resources

Here is a beautiful prayer composed by fellow Lectors half way around the world in Singapore. Revel in the fact that God has called you to be that hollow reed through which His Holy Word will pass!

PRAYER OF A MINISTER OF THE WORD

From the lectors of Our Lady, Star of the Sea Parish, Singapore
(In Preparation)

Lord, invest me with your power
as I prepare to proclaim the marvel of your message.
I have prepared my reading,
I have tried to take within me
the meaning of what I am about to proclaim.

Help me to proclaim, not just with my lips,
but with my whole heart and soul.
Lord, make me a hollow reed
so that your voice will be heard by all who hear me.

Free me of excessive concern over my performance.
Convert my feeling of nervousness and
turn all my apprehension into energy
for proclaiming your Word with power and authority.

May your Spirit live in me and
fill the Holy Word that I proclaim!

Study Materials

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops - The Lector at Mass:
<http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/girm/lit3.shtml>

Lector's Notes Home Page: <http://www.lectorprep.org/>

Pronunciation Guide: <http://www.howsay.com/>

A Lector's Guide and Commentary to the Revised Common Lectionary
J. Ted Blakley (Available on Amazon)

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