

THE LECTOR AT MASS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Reading and Explaining the Word of God

When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the gospel. The readings of God's word must therefore be listened to by all with reverence; they make up a principal element of the liturgy. In the biblical readings, God's word addresses all people of every era and is understandable to them, and a fuller understanding and efficacy are fostered by a living commentary on it, that is to say, by the homily, understood as an integral part of the liturgical action (GIRM 29).(1)

Vocal Expression of the Different Texts

In texts that are to be delivered in a loud and clear voice, whether by the priest or deacon or by the lector, or by all, the tone of voice should correspond to the genre of the text, that is, accordingly as it is a reading, a prayer, an instruction, an acclamation, or a liturgical song; the tone should also be suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering. Other criteria are the idiom of different languages and the genius of peoples. (38).

Silence

The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation. For this reason, any kind of haste which impedes recollection must be clearly avoided. Brief moments of silence are appropriate during the liturgy. Such moments should be suitable for the gathered assembly, in which the Word of God is taken into the heart by the fostering of the Holy Spirit, and its response is prepared through prayer. Such moments of silence are opportunely observed after the first and second reading, and then, at the completion of the homily (56).

Scripture Readings

In the readings, the table of God's word is laid for the faithful and the riches of the Bible are opened to them. Hence, the arrangement of the biblical readings must be observed, whereby the unity of each Testament and of the history of salvation is demonstrated; nor is it permitted that the readings and responsorial psalm, which contain the word of God, are substituted by other, non-biblical texts (57).

In the celebration of the Mass with a congregation, the readings are always given from the ambo (58).

By tradition, the office of reading the Scriptures is a ministerial, not a presidential function. The "ordinary" minister of reading the Scripture is someone who has been formally installed into the "Ministry of Lector". This is usually a seminarian who is studying for the priesthood. The order of ministries which they receive is as follows:

1. Ministry of Lector
2. Ministry of Acolyte
3. Deacon
4. Priest

The readings should be delivered by an instituted lector, the Gospel being proclaimed by the deacon or by a priest other than the celebrant. If, however, a deacon or other priest is not present, the priest celebrant proclaims the Gospel. Further, if a suitable lector is not present, then the priest celebrant also delivers the other readings. After each reading, whoever does the reading proclaims the acclamation, "The Word of the Lord". Responding to it, the gathered people honor the word of God which they have received with faith and grateful hearts (59).

The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the gospel reading. He may also announce the intentions for the General Intercessions and, in the absence of the psalmist, sing or read the psalm between the readings. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the lector has specific duties which he alone ought to perform, even though ordained ministers may be present (99).

In the absence of an instituted lector, other lay people may be designated to proclaim the readings from the Sacred Scriptures. Such designated lectors must be truly qualified and carefully prepared for this office, so that the faithful will develop a warm and lively love for Sacred Scripture from listening to the reading from the sacred texts (101).

Liturgy of the Word

After the opening prayer, all sit. The priest may, in a very few words, introduce the faithful to the liturgy of the word. Then the lector goes to the ambo and proclaims the first reading from the Lectionary already placed there before Mass; all sit and listen. At the end, the lector makes the acclamation, The Word of the Lord, with all responding, Thanks be to God.

Then a brief period of silence may be observed as appropriate, so that all may meditate on what they have heard (128).

The psalmist or the lector sings or recites the psalm verse and, as a rule, the congregation makes the response (129).

If there is a second reading before the Gospel, the lector proclaims it from the ambo with all listening and making the acclamation, "The Word of the Lord", at the end, as above (128). Then, as the occasion allows, a brief period of silence may be observed (130).

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LECTOR IN THE ORDER OF THE MASS
AS PER THE GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS OF THE ROMAN MISSAL
FOR ST. PATRICK'S PARISH**

Before Mass

1. The lector will come to the vesting Sacristy at least ten minutes before Mass begins.
2. They will sign in their name on the "Ministry Sign-In" sheet. If they are unable to lector, it is their responsibility to find a substitute.
3. After checking the readings and checking with the deacon or priest, the lector will make sure the Lectionary is opened to the correct page on the ambo, opened to the First Reading. Also, they should make sure the microphone at the ambo is on.
4. All the ministers will gather for a brief prayer - about 5 minutes before Mass begins.

Introductory Rites

1. Entrance Procession:

Here at St. Patrick's Parish, the order of procession into the church is as follows:

- The Cross Bearer
- The two Candle Bearers – side by side
- The Deacon – with the Book of the Gospels
- The Lector

NB: *If no Deacon is present, the Lector will carry the Book of the Gospels slightly elevated.*

- The Priest
2. If the lector ***is not carrying*** the Book of the Gospels, upon reaching the steps to the altar, he/she will make a profound bow toward the altar and go to their seat. During the actual celebration of the Mass, since the tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament is not in the Sanctuary proper, the lector ***does not genuflect*** to the tabernacle as you approach the altar.
 3. If the lector ***is carrying*** the Book of the Gospels, upon reaching the steps of the altar, he/she will bow their head, then they will go to the altar and place the Book of the Gospels on it. ***Do not stop and wait for anyone else*** – proceed to the altar.
 4. The Book of the Gospels is carried in procession as it represents the presence of Christ as the Living Word of God.

Liturgy of the Word

1. After the opening prayer, when everyone has been seated, the lector approaches the ambo. They ***do not*** have to make a profound bow to the altar. Generally, these gestures of reverence are reserved for the entrance and closing processions or anytime outside the celebration of the Mass.

2. The lector will read from the Lectionary opened on the ambo. They will wait until the priest is seated, and all of the people are seated and quiet before beginning.
3. They will introduce the First Reading using only the words in the Lectionary. They will pause for a brief moment, and then do the reading. **They do not say, "Our First Reading Is a Reading from..."**.
4. Responsorial Psalm:
 - After the First Reading, the lector will say, "The Word of the Lord", (do not hold the Lectionary up). Then they will sit in the front chairs or stand to the side while the Responsorial Psalm is being sung.
 - After the singing of the Responsorial Psalm and the Cantor has returned to his/her place, come back to the Ambo.

If the Responsorial Psalm is not being sung, the lector will step back from the lectern, bow their head and pause for 30 seconds (the length of one Hail Mary. This gives the people time to reflect on the First Reading before beginning the Responsorial Psalm. DO NOT BE IN A HURRY!

Then they will step up to the ambo again and proclaim the response. The lector need not state, "The Responsorial Psalm is ..." –they simply proclaim the response forcefully and clearly, and after the congregation has repeated it, proceed to the verses.

5. The lector should not hurry into the Second Reading. They introduce the Second Reading using the exact words that are in the Lectionary. They will pause for a moment, then continue with the Second Reading and after completing it, say, "The Word of the Lord" (do not hold the Lectionary up).
6. Close the Lectionary then place it on the shelf in the Ambo. This will clear the ambo for the Book of the Gospels.
7. The lector will return to their place in the congregation (do not bow toward the altar). The priest, deacon, or song leader will sing the alleluia. The congregation will repeat it. The priest or deacon will proclaim the Gospel and preach the homily.
8. After the priest gives the introduction to the General Intercessions, the lector returns to the ambo to announce the intentions.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

1. At the conclusion of the Mass, the lector **does not process** out with the Book of the Gospels. The Lectionary is never carried in procession.
2. The Book of the Gospels is not carried out because the Word of God has now been proclaimed and is in the hearts and minds of the faithful who take the Word with them into the world - to live out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

General Items:

1. Lectors are encouraged to prepare for lecturing by reading and praying with the readings every weekend, even the weekends when they are not ministering.

2. Attire: As an act of reverence for what is being celebrated – bringing the Word of God to the congregation – the lector is asked to dress appropriately. Generally, men are asked to wear dress slacks, shirts with collars (a suit, coat and tie would be nice!), and dress shoes. Women are asked to wear a blouse with pants or a skirt, or a dress which covers the shoulders and is of modest length, and dress shoes. Generally, shorts, tee-shirts, low cut “hip-hugger” pants, strapless tops, sports shoes, flip-flops, etc. are not acceptable attire.