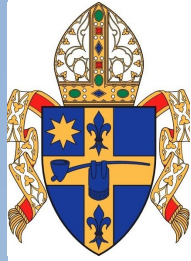


*The Ministry of Lectors in
the Parishes of the
Diocese of Peoria*



*"Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you do not have
LIFE within you." - John 6:53*



The Church dates to teach that when the Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, Christ himself is present in the Sacred Liturgy. Lectors are the human voice and essential instruments the Divine Author uses to convey the beauty of His message.

Those who perform the ministry of lector at Mass are not simply reading lifeless words from ancient texts, nor are they actors trying to revive Shakespeare for a modern audience. Lectors proclaim the Word of God which is living and active. They provide an important service to their brothers and sisters who listen attentively and are called to reflect on every word they hear from the pulpit. This short pamphlet is provided to help lectors proclaim the Word of God effectively so that people may prayerfully absorb the word into their hearts and lives through the Mass.

PRAY

Preparation for reading at Sunday Mass should begin early in the week. By praying and meditating on the Scriptures, you will be much better disposed to public proclamation since the Word must be in your heart for it to effectively be on your lips. Borrow

a missalette from your parish or invest in any number of liturgical books available through Catholic publishers or bookstores. There are many good resources designed specifically for lectors which provide pronunciation guides and even brief commentaries to better understand the passages being prepared. A reader of God's Word must dwell with the texts and encounter God's presence in them.

PRACTICE

As Sunday approaches, make sure you have carefully checked the pronunciation of any difficult words, especially proper names and places and consider the appropriate places to pause between phrases. As a fruit of your prayer, ask whether there is a phrase or word that calls for emphasis. Practice reading aloud. Listen to yourself and maybe even ask someone else to listen and offer feedback.

PREPARE

As a minister of the sacred liturgy, you have a special obligation to dress appropriately for service on the altar. "Sunday best" is a worthy tradition especially for someone who has been chosen and trained to proclaim God's Word. Consider what modest clothes you might wear to a formal event, a wedding or

funeral. Arrive at church ahead of time to prepare your heart and your mind. Check in with the priest or sacristan according to your parish policy and make sure you are familiar with what is expected of you. Look at the text in the Lectionary and adjust the microphone as needed. And then take some time, a good 5-10 minutes, to simply settle your mind and pray before Mass.

PROCLAIM

Depending on the custom of your parish, you will either sit in the sanctuary or in the pew. If you need to enter the sanctuary or cross in front of the altar on your way to the ambo (also called the “pulpit” or “lectern”) make sure that you make a deep bow towards the altar. We no longer genuflect to the tabernacle during Mass at the altar is the focus on the action. Obviously outside of Mass, we genuflect on our right knee when passing before the tabernacle and when entering and leaving our pews.

There are two important “announcements” that begin and end each reading. With a strong, confident voice, announce where the reading is taken from; for example, “a reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians”. There is no need to help the congregation to count the readings which can create awkward and complicated announcements. Do not say: “The Se-

cond reading is a reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians”, too many words—simply read and announce what is printed in the book.

After you have announced where the reading is from, pause and take a deep breath so that there is a noticeable pause between the announcement and the beginning of God’s Word. At the end of the text, pause again and then proclaim, “The Word of the Lord.” If you are proclaiming the Psalm as well, the Church recommends a moment of silence between readings. If your parish does not observe a true period of quiet, consider at least a prolonged pause. Maybe you could silently pray a “Hail Mary” or “Our Father” to provide a moment for the people to reflectively collect their thoughts.

While proclaiming the reading, try to make eye contact with the congregation. Prayerful practice during the week will help to ensure your familiarity with the text and enable you to look up. This will help connect you to the people and through you, will connect the people to the Word of God being proclaimed. The intonation and inflection in your voice aid in drawing out the meaning of God’s Word and will help the Scriptures to be more real in the ears of those listening, and will flow naturally if you have

prayed these readings beforehand. Even with modern amplification, it is important to project your voice and to read with clarity and confidence. Proclaim as if you mean it, or rather, proclaim as if GOD means it—because he does.

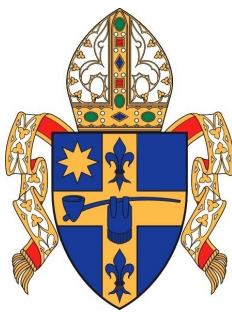
POINTS OF THOUGHT

Be ready for any variables. The important time before Mass will help you get ready for some of the unique elements that may change from time to time—

- Will the cantor or choir sing the psalm?
- Is there a Book of the Gospel?
- In the absence of a deacon, will the lector carry the Book of the Gospel during the procession?
- Do you need to close the lectionary after your reading?
- Who is reading the petitions after the creed?
- When do you come forward if you are reading them?

Ample preparation time before Mass will help you be ready for these and other potential variations.

NOTES



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