

STANDARD PROCEDURES FOR ST. MICHAEL LECTORS



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS

THE LECTOR AT MASS

General Principles

Scripture Readings

In the readings, the table of God's Word is spread before the faithful, and the treasures of the Bible are opened to them. Hence, it is preferable that the arrangement of the biblical readings be maintained, for by them the unity of both Testaments and of salvation history is brought out. Nor is it lawful to replace the readings and Responsorial Psalm, which contain the Word of God, with other, non-biblical texts.

In the celebration of the Mass with the people, the readings are always read from the ambo.

The function of proclaiming the readings is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. Therefore the readings are to be read by a reader, but the Gospel by the Deacon or, in his absence, by another Priest. If, however, a Deacon or another Priest is not present, the Priest Celebrant himself should read the Gospel, and moreover, if no other suitable reader is present, the Priest Celebrant should also proclaim the other readings as well.

After each reading, whoever reads it pronounces the acclamation, and by means of the reply the assembled people give honor to the Word of God that they have received in faith and with gratitude. (GIRM, nos. 57-59)

The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer and, in the absence of a psalmist, recite the Psalm between the readings.

In the absence of an instituted lector, other lay people may be deputed to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, people who are truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared, so that by their hearing the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for Sacred Scripture. (GIRM, no. 101)

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1. **Be there!** If you are unable to attend your scheduled Mass, please try to find a substitute. If you cannot find a sub, please notify the Office at St. Michaels as soon as possible.
2. **Prepare!** Preparation and rehearsal are critical. Remember, you are proclaiming the Word, not just reading it. This preparation consists in learning the vocal techniques of proclamation, so that you may make use of the resources of the human voice in such a way that the intonation, pitch, pacing, and timbre of your speech may most effectively convey the content of the sacred writings. A couple of websites you may find helpful:

<http://www.lectorprep.org/> (provides a variety of preparation materials for the readings)

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings-audio.cfm> (provides a podcast of the reading – you can listen to someone else do the reading).

<http://www.biblespeech.com> (provides an audio and visual pronunciation of words in the Bible)

3. **Dress:** Your task as a lector is to help the gathered assembly to encounter God in His Word. Thus everything that you do during mass should aid the faithful to focus on the scripture, and not on yourself. This means that your dress should not distract from the reading of the Word of God, but should rather express the dignity of the Word, and the importance that the lector assigns to his/her service. Your dress should not be in any way revealing or distracting, and should correspond to the importance of the Word of God. Female lectors should wear dresses which do not reach above the knee. Shirts which have bold writing on them are inappropriate.
4. **Prior to Mass:**
 - Arrive at least **20 minutes** before the Mass begins. Identify yourself to the presiding Priest, especially if he is a visiting Priest, to inform him that you are the Lector. Check with the presider for any special instructions. Confirm the pronunciation of any difficult words or names from the reading.
 - Before Mass begins, proceed up to the lectern on the altar and find the readings in the book and mark them with the ribbon, if that has not been done already.

- Check for the Prayers of the Faithful and any special announcements.
- If possible, you should sit towards the front of the church and on the center aisle.
- The microphone is designed to pick up your voice and it is usually not necessary to adjust it each time you approach the lectern. If you are very short, it may become necessary to adjust it to your height.

5. **Opening Announcement:**

A few minutes prior to the beginning of Mass, the Lector should proceed up to the podium on the right side of the altar and find the sheet with the Opening Announcement. The Opening Announcement usually includes naming the person for whom the Mass is being offered and the number and title of the Entrance Hymn.

The Lector should watch for a signal from the presiding Priest at the back of the church to begin Mass.

Upon a signal from the presiding Priest, the Lector should welcome the congregation and read the Opening Announcements.

6. **First and Second Readings:**

After the Priest has read the opening prayer and the congregation begins to sit down, the Lector proceeds up the center aisle toward the lectern, pausing to briefly bow before the altar.

Once at the lectern, announce “A Reading from _____” then pause briefly before beginning the actual reading.

After you have completed the reading, pause momentarily, look at the congregation and announce “The Word of the Lord.” Do NOT pick up the lectionary as you do this.

Step down from the lectern and return to your seat, bowing briefly towards the altar.

7. Prayer of the Faithful

At the beginning of the last paragraph of the Nicene Creed (“We believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church...”) proceed up to the podium on the right side of the altar.

At the conclusion of the Priest’s introduction to the Prayer of the Faithful, read the intercessions. After each intercession, announce “We pray to the Lord.”

After the last intercession, wait until the Priest gives his final intercession (or prayer) and then return to your seat, bowing briefly towards the altar.

8. Proclaiming the Word:

1. Be prepared. Spend time during the week leading up to Mass looking over the readings you have been assigned. Use the available web sites and Lector Workbook to get an understanding of the reading and the historical context. This will help you proclaim the Word as it was intended.
2. Break the reading down and decide where you may need to provide extra emphasis, perhaps an extended pause, to allow the congregation to reflect on the reading.
3. Start strong and confidently. Memorize the introduction to the reading (e.g. “A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians.”) so that you can begin the reading maintaining good eye contact with the congregation.
4. Read SLOWLY. People have a tendency to read too fast. Deliberately pause at natural breaks in the reading to allow the congregation time to absorb the reading.
5. Your goal should be to proclaim the reading in such a way as to have the congregation listen to you, rather than read along in their missals.
6. In the end, as Lectors we are not intended to be actors. Do not be overly dramatic in proclaiming the reading as that can become distracting to the congregation.

Notes: There are times when the readings are offered in a short and a long version. Check with the presiding Priest before Mass begins to see if he wants you to use the short or long version of any reading. Also check with the presider over questions on pronunciation or any other difficulties with the readings before Mass.