

## MINISTRY OF READER (LECTOR)

The ministry of reader calls us to be servants of the Living Word of God. In proclaiming the readings at liturgy, the reader does more than simply read. A reader's spirituality must include an understanding of Holy Scripture as God's Living Word made present to mankind throughout history, but most fully present in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.<sup>1</sup>

### Questions & Answers for Readers

#### 1. Who may proclaim scripture during Mass?

In the absence of an instituted lector, other laypersons (readers) may be commissioned to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture. The duty of the reader is to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. A reader may also announce the intentions for the Prayer of the Faithful and, in the absence of a psalmist, proclaim the Psalm between the readings. [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereinafter GIRM) #99*]

The readings should be proclaimed by a lector or reader, and the Gospel by a deacon or, in his absence, a priest other than the celebrant. If a deacon or another priest is not present, the priest celebrant himself should read the Gospel. Further, if another suitable lector is also not present, then the priest celebrant should also proclaim the other readings. (GIRM # 59)

After each reading, whoever reads gives the acclamation, to which the gathered people reply, honoring the word of God that they have received in faith and with grateful hearts. (GIRM # 59)

#### 2. What are the requirements for a reader of the Word at liturgy?

For all parish liturgies, including Sacramental celebrations, weddings and funerals, readers should be formed and fully initiated Catholics. In the ministry of lector/reader, the reader is ministering to the community. This is most appropriately done when the individual is able to proclaim the Scripture from the depths of their lived faith.

#### 3. What about Sacramental celebrations of First Eucharist, Confirmation, and Marriage?

Sacramental celebrations are Parish liturgies where the reader ministers to the assembly by proclaiming the Word of God. It is important that this be done in a

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<sup>1</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, Ph.D. *Becoming Word for One Another: A Spirituality for Lectors*. Liguori Press. 2002.

reverent, life-giving manner. As always, readers during sacramental celebrations should be fully initiated members of the community who are properly formed for this role.

During the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, the candidates will *become* fully initiated. Since the confirmandi are being ministered to by the faith community, it is inappropriate for confirmandi to exercise ministerial roles, such as reader, during the liturgy. An exception may be made if a person who is to be confirmed has been involved in a liturgical formation process to become a reader.

#### **4. What about Masses for children in school or parish religious education?**

In the Introduction of the Lectionary for Children, the Church recognizes that some younger children may be able to read the scriptures “competently,” “but the witness of older children, teenagers, or adults ministering graciously and reverently to young children engaged in liturgical prayer, is more conducive to the children’s growing reverence for the Word of God, than the peer ministry of embarrassed or ill-prepared children.” *The Lectionary for Mass with Children, #23*

Therefore, in the Diocese of Trenton, persons selected to proclaim the Word at School or Religious Education liturgies for children, may be middle school age youth, adolescents or adults who are properly formed for the ministry of reader.

#### **5. What kind of training is helpful for readers?**

Those who exercise the ministry of reader must be truly suited and carefully prepared, so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture from listening to the sacred readings. Training should include both spiritual and technical preparation. Biblical formation of the reader should enable the reader to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. The liturgical formation should equip the reader with some grasp of the meaning and structure of the Liturgy of the Word and of the significance of its connection with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The technical preparation should make the reader more skilled in the art of reading publicly, and include their own voice along with proper use of sound equipment. *Lectionary for Mass, Introduction, #55*

#### **6. How should a reader prepare for his/her part in the liturgy?**

The reader should prayerfully prepare before arriving for the celebration of Mass by reading the assigned scripture, taking care to discern the meaning and importance of the text. The reader should also practice the readings aloud, making sure to pronounce words distinctly, and to understand their meaning. The ministry of reader is one of evangelization, inviting the assembly into a deeper and richer relationship with God, and as such the reader should come prepared to proclaim the Word with

conviction and passion. The reader should also arrive at Church early enough to attend to any practical details, such as placement of the microphone, reading over the announcements and/or petitions, and to communicate with the priest about any necessary details.

It is encouraged that parishes give their readers aids that assist in their preparation to proclaim the readings. These “workbooks” give the reader the insights and pronunciations needed to clearly proclaim the Word of God. The Lector Workbook or the missalette may never be used during the celebration of Mass to proclaim the Word. The Lectionary and the Book of Gospels are to be the only books used in the proclamation of the Word.

### **7. How are the readings selected?**

In the sacred readings, the table of God’s Word is prepared for the faithful, and the riches of the Bible are opened to them. Therefore, it is preferable to maintain the arrangement of the biblical readings as found in the Lectionary, by which light is shed on the unity of both Testaments and of salvation history. It is unlawful to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the Word of God. **(GIRM # 57)** Additional information on the structure of the Order of Readings for Mass may be found in the *Lectionary for Mass, Chapter IV, The Structure of the Order of Readings for Mass*.

### **8. What is acceptable attire for a reader?**

The reader should wear appropriate clothing which shows respect for the ministry of reader. **(GIRM # 339)**

### **9. Processional/Seating**

The reader may take part in the Entrance procession or may take his/her seat before Mass in the assembly. The decision of whether the reader/lector will be part of the entrance procession may be made by the pastor or the parish’s Liturgy Committee. By tradition, the function of proclaiming the readings is ministerial, not presidential. **(GIRM # 59)**. Therefore, it is preferred that the reader have his/her seat in the assembly. The reader should approach the ambo after a moment of silence following the Opening Prayer, as the Liturgy of the Word begins. Between the readings, the reader may be seated in an appropriate space near the ambo. After the readings, the reader should return to his/her place in the assembly.

### **10. Where are the readings proclaimed?**

In the celebration of the Mass with a congregation, the readings are always proclaimed from an ambo. The dignity of the word of God requires that the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word. It is appropriate that this place be a stationary ambo, and not simply a movable lectern. The ambo must be located in keeping with the design of each church in such a way that the ordained ministers and lectors may be clearly seen and heard by the faithful.

Only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (*Exultet*) are to be proclaimed from the ambo. The ambo may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it. **(GIRM # 309)** The ambo should not be used for the announcements.

#### **11. How many readers should be used?**

The readings for Mass may be divided among a number of readers. If there are several readings, it is well to distribute them among a number of readers. But it is not at all appropriate that several persons divide a single element of the celebration among themselves, e.g., that the same reading be proclaimed by two readers/lectors, one after the other, except as far as the Passion of the Lord is concerned. **(GIRM # 109)**

The role of commentator may be fulfilled by a lector/reader. The commentator is a genuine liturgical ministry, which consists in presenting to the congregation of the faithful, from a suitable place (not the ambo), relevant explanations and comments that are clear, of marked sobriety, meticulously prepared and, as a rule, written out and approved beforehand by the celebrant. *Lectionary for Mass, #57*

The Prayers of the Faithful are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place by the deacon. In the absence of a deacon, the intercessions may be announced by a cantor, lector or one of the lay faithful. **(GIRM # 68)**

#### **12. What is the importance of periods of silence?**

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation. During the Liturgy of the Word, it is appropriate to include brief periods of silence, in which the Word of God may be grasped by the heart, and a response through prayer may be prepared. It is appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the first and second readings, and lastly at the conclusion of the homily. **(GIRM # 56)**

#### **13. How should scripture be proclaimed?**

In the faithful proclamation of Scripture the reader has the privilege of sharing the Word of God with the assembly. When Scripture is truly proclaimed with conviction, the readings can stir souls to gratitude, call sinners to conversion, console the despairing, and exhort those who have become lax.<sup>2</sup>

Scriptural texts are to be spoken in an audible, clear voice. The tone of voice should correspond to the genre of the text itself, that is, the tone should be suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering. Care should be given to correct and careful pronunciation of words. Readers should speak at a moderate pace, so that the Word will be easily understood. Occasional eye contact with the assembly is appropriate. At the conclusion of the reading, the reader should pause, look out at the assembly and proclaim “The Word of the Lord.”

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<sup>2</sup> **Becoming Word for One Another**, p. 29.