

LECTOR GUIDELINES

St. Pius X Catholic Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ROLE

The ministry of the lector is vital to the life of our parish because it is through the lector that the Word of God is proclaimed (i.e., “comes alive”). A love for the Scriptures and their meaning in the life of the parish is central to this role. This is best exhibited in a lector’s study and practice in preparing to proclaim the word. It is also revealed in the ability and skill a lector demonstrates in actually proclaiming the Word at Mass. A lector must have both a love for the Scriptures and a love for those who will be listening to that Word.

PREPARATION BEFORE MASS

* **Study and Prepare the Scripture Readings:** Using the Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers, read the Scripture (Gospel, first & second readings, and responsorial psalm) a few days in advance.

- *Read the Gospel first. Then read the first and second readings (with the psalm in between) which are intended to prepare the assembly to hear the Gospel.*
- *Read your selection out loud to yourself to find the words or phrases that are difficult to pronounce.*
- *Open yourself to the meaning of the text. **Pray** for the Spirit to open the ears of those who will hear the reading (including yours). **Pray** for the strength to put aside your own ego and for the Spirit to speak through you.*

Understand the selection.

- *Study the text to reach an understanding of the meaning of **individual** words.*
- *Study the text to come to an understanding of the meaning of the **entire passage**.*
 - *Identify (or underline) the important words or phrases.*
 - *Compare the text in the lectionary to the one in your Bible.*
 - *Read in your Bible what comes before and after to understand the context.*
 - *Determine the literary form of the text. Is it a story, a letter/epistle, or a poem? Care needs to be taken so that all three forms are not read in the same fashion.*
- *Make sure you are pronouncing words correctly. If in doubt check a dictionary or the pronunciation guide in the back of the Workbook for Lectors.*
- *Study the punctuation. Pay particular attention to how ending marks of punctuation (semi-colon or period) complete the thoughts within the passage.*
- *Practice the selection (out loud) as often as you feel is necessary. Be aware of your voice quality (breathe from your diaphragm), volume, diction, pace, rhythm, and eye contact.*
- *Take your time. As a general rule lectors do not read too slowly.*

* **When you cannot lector at your scheduled time:** Two lectors are assigned for a given Mass. If a problem arises and you are unable to lector, it is important to get a sub by calling another lector. One lector proclaiming both readings should happen only in the rarest of occasions.

* **Attire:** Ordained ministers such as the celebrant and deacons are required by liturgical prescription to wear certain vestments. Although a specific form of vesture is not required of lectors, the dignity of the Sacred Liturgy requires that those accepting the call to such ministry dress in a manner reflecting the profound nature of the call. Slacks are fine for women but please no bare midriffs or low-cut or sleeveless tops. Men: ties and/or jackets are preferred but not required. Everyone should avoid jeans, shorts, and t-shirts.

LECTORING AT ST. PIUS X

Terminology:

Vesting sacristy: Space located off the Gathering Space; the site where books needed for Sunday Masses are located; the place where priests and deacons change or ‘vest’ to prepare for Mass.

Working sacristy: Space located behind the sanctuary; site where the ‘work’ of preparing for liturgy before and after Mass takes place.

ON THE DAY YOU LECTOR:

- Stop by the Liturgy bulletin board in the Gathering Space at least 15 minutes before Mass.
- Check off your name on the sign-in sheet so that the Presider and the other lector know that you are present.
- Check to see if there is a deacon assisting at the Mass. The easiest way is to check the Eucharistic Minister sign-up sheet on the Liturgy bulletin board.
- Locate the lectionary (probably at the ambo, but maybe in the Vesting Sacristy).
- Review the reading one last time to see it as printed in the lectionary. The lectionary should be left on the ambo, opened to the correct page.
- Be sure the wooden stand for the *Book of the Gospels* is in place on the altar.
- The First Reader then takes the *Book of the Gospels* (if there is no Deacon*) and waits in the Gathering Space with the other ministers to greet people as they enter.
- If there is no Deacon, the Second Reader locates the general intercessions on the shelf of the ambo. Read through them one last time, noticing any names that have been added and practicing their pronunciations aloud.
- The lector proclaiming the Second Reading takes a seat in the assembly near the ambo.

DURING MASS:

1. Entrance Procession:

*When there is a vested deacon, the *Book of the Gospels* will be carried in the Entrance Procession by the deacon. The lector proclaiming the First Reading is not in the procession and can have a seat in the assembly near the ambo.

When there is no deacon, the lector proclaiming the First Reading will carry the *Book of the Gospels* in the procession. When the procession reaches the stairs in front of the altar, join the other ministers (except the crossbearer) in reverencing the altar with a profound bow. Wait a brief time before moving to place the Book on the altar.

In case the Presider moves to approach the altar from the front to venerate it with a kiss, let the priest go first. The lector will then move up the altar steps and standing before the altar, reverently place the *Book of the Gospels* in the stand on the altar. The lector then takes a seat.

2. The Readings:

FIRST READER: As people are seated after the opening prayer, walk to the sanctuary steps, bow to the altar, and move to the ambo. Give others and yourself time to be settled before beginning. Proclaim the Word. After finishing the reading, pause to allow time for the concluding thought of the reading to settle into the ear of

the listeners, and then say, “The Word of the Lord” without raising the lectionary. Wait for the response of the assembly. Then turn the page if necessary, reverently step away from the ambo, bow to the altar, and return to your seat.

SECOND READER: After the Responsorial Psalm, walk to the sanctuary steps, bow to the altar, and move to the ambo. Proclaim the Word as described above. After the Second Reading, quietly move the lectionary down to the top of the nesting ambo. (Removing the lectionary allows room at the ambo for the *Book of the Gospels*.) Reverently step away from the ambo, bow to the altar, and return to your seat.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

- 1) Beginning in Advent and continuing through Pentecost, children in grades 1-5 will leave the Church after the opening prayer, to attend Children’s Liturgy of the Word in Pastor’s Hall. The First Reader should wait until nearly all the children have exited the Church before approaching the sanctuary to proclaim the reading. If you happen to forget and approach the ambo early, simply stand near the ambo and wait for them to leave. Be sure all children and the adult leaders have left the Church and closed the door before you begin reading.
- 2) On the *rare occasions* when there is no second reader present, step back from the ambo between readings and sit in the chair behind the ambo for the responsorial psalm. Then allow for a short period of time (10-15 seconds) before beginning the second reading.
- 3) During a *weekday Mass* when there are no musicians, you will also proclaim the responsorial psalm. Remember to look up to lead the assembly in saying the response. Lectors are not scheduled for weekday Masses. Instead, members of the congregation volunteer to read on a first-come, first-served basis.

3. General Intercessions:

After the homily and profession of faith (creed) the Second Reader approaches the sanctuary, bows to the altar, and proceeds to the ambo for the General Intercessions. After praying these prayers, remain at the ambo until after the Presider has finished his prayer. Then return to your seat, reverencing the altar on the way back. (*See specific instructions below.*)

NOTE: The *Book of the Gospels* is not carried in the procession at the end of Mass. (This sacred book is kept in the Church and the Word of God goes forth now in our hearts.)

AFTER MASS:

The First Reader returns the *Book of the Gospels* to the Vesting Sacristy.

* After noon Mass, also return the lectionary to the Vesting Sacristy.

LECTOR GUIDELINES – GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

On Monday or Tuesday you will receive an email (or a hardcopy in the mail if you do not have your email address) containing the General Intercessions for the upcoming weekend. These are sent out so you can read and pray them throughout the week, in preparation of leading our parishioners in prayer. Keep in mind that as the weekend approaches, more names of those who are sick and/or have died may be added. Some names will be written phonetically to assist with correct pronunciation.

Before Mass, the Second Lector (the lector scheduled to do the 2nd reading), who will pray the Intercessions during Mass, should enter the sanctuary and locate the Intercessions at the ambo. They will be in a black binder on the left side of the ambo shelf. (NOTE: There are what appear to be two shelves at the ambo. The upper one, about three inches below the top of the ambo, is the shelf. The lower one is actually the top of the nesting ambo*, which is where you have probably already been putting the Lectionary after the second reading. Please note this distinction.) This is the time to notice any names that have been added or deleted from the Intercessions, as well as remind yourself whether there will be a baptism or other special event during Mass. When you are finished looking them over, return them to the left side of the shelf so the top of the ambo contains only the Lectionary. On the right side of the shelf you may notice the priest's homily notes; please do not move or disturb these.

As is our custom, both lectors sit in the midst of the congregation during Mass. We highly recommend that the Second Lector sit in a pew close to the front on the ambo side.

Mass proceeds as usual, with both lectors proclaiming their readings and the Second Lector putting the Lectionary on top of the nesting ambo after he/she is finished, to make room on top of the ambo for the Book of the Gospels. The Second Lector then returns to his/her pew for the Gospel and the Homily.

After the homily, the Presider will normally pause briefly and then invite the congregation to stand for the profession of faith (Nicene Creed: "We believe..."). The Second Lector should remain in his/her pew until the end of the creed ("...We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.") and then *immediately* approach the ambo. As when you proclaim the reading, you will reverence the altar on your way to and from the sanctuary. While you are walking the Presider will invite us to prayer with words such as "Knowing that God hears and answers our prayers, we now confidently raise our voices and express our needs." When he has paused and you know he is ready, you will take the binder from the shelf, place it on top of the Book of the Gospels, and pray the Intercessions.

***PRAY** the Intercessions, don't simply read them. This is different from proclaiming the readings at Mass. Prayer has a different tone and a different attitude. Project your voice clearly and slowly.*

After you have finished, remain at the ambo while the Presider finishes with words such as "God of truth and righteousness, you have heard our needs. Grant us what is good and holy in your sight. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen." As the congregation is seated, return the binder to the shelf so that only the Book of the Gospels remains on top of the ambo. Then leave the sanctuary and return to your pew.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

Deacon

When a deacon is assisting at Mass (i.e., when a deacon is vested and sitting in the sanctuary throughout Mass), he will pray the Intercessions. The Second Lector's only responsibility is to proclaim the second reading.

Baptism

When there is a baptism during Mass, we do not pray the Nicene Creed. Instead, we renew our baptismal promises as a community. So instead of waiting for the end of the Nicene Creed, the Second Lector waits for the end of the fourth section of this Profession of Faith: "This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen." At this time the Second Lector approaches the ambo as described above.

Sung Intercessions

At certain times of the liturgical year (Ash Wednesday, the Sundays of Lent, Palm Sunday, and Holy Thursday) the Intercessions are chanted (sung). At these times the cantor will chant the Intercessions from the ambo. He/she will approach the ambo at the same time and in the same way as the Second Lector does when the Intercessions are read.

Only One Lector

The Liturgy Commission and I cannot stress enough how very important it is that we have two lectors at each Mass. This is true whether the Second Lector prays the Intercessions or not; our experience has been that the proclamation of the Scriptures is much deeper and richer if we have two different individuals doing the first and second readings. Now more than ever it is imperative that both lectors who are scheduled to read fulfill their responsibilities. All our lectors are provided with lists of names, phone numbers, and email addresses, to facilitate the process of switching with someone or finding a sub. Even if a last-minute conflict arises, we ask that you try to find a replacement rather than calling the other scheduled lector and asking him/her to do both readings. *If*, however, there is only one lector at Mass, he/she will need to pray the Intercessions as well as proclaim both readings.

No Creed

On occasion the Creed may be omitted. In other words, after the homily and a period of brief silence, the Presider will stand and say something like, "Please stand for our prayers of intercession." The Second Lector will need to notice this omission and immediately approach the sanctuary to pray the intercessions.

Adding Names of Sick or Dead

Occasionally before or after Mass a parishioner may approach you and ask you to add a name to the Intercessions. Please do not write any names in; instead, always refer the person requesting this to either a priest or deacon. Our policy is: *sick* – we only pray for sick parishioners, not family members; and *dead* – we pray for deceased parishioners as well as family members.