

*Sacred Heart
Catholic Church*

***The Lector at
Mass***

CONTENTS

General Principles.....	4
Reading and Explaining the Word of God	
Vocal Expressions of the Different Texts	
Silence	
Scripture Readings	5
GETTING READY	6
Functions of the Lector.....	7
Introductory Rite	
Liturgy of the Word	7
Liturgy of the Eucharist	9
Pastoral Notes	9

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 readings should be delivered by a 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. 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).

GETTING READY

- **Practice** -Go over your readings at least two days before your assigned date. This will help you if there are any words you are unsure how to pronounce. The Lectors workbook given to you aids with the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words.
- **Promptness** - ALWAYS ARRIVE ON TIME
15-20 minutes before Mass starts for Ordinary Time.
Arrive 30 minutes early or as instructed by the Lector Coordinator for solemnities, Feasts, or special Celebrations.
- **Sign in** under the Mass you are to serve. If you are substituting for another lector, add the word “SUB” after your name.
- **Check in** with the Sacristan for any special instructions upon arrival at the church and to assist in preparing the Lectionary or the *Prayers of the Faithful* binder.
- **Check the Lectionary and the *Prayers of the Faithful* binder**- Once signed in, check that the Lectionary has been marked and the *Prayers of the Faithful* binder set. Otherwise, find the book or binder, and set it to the correct readings and mark them with a ribbon. If you are not sure, please ask the sacristan or a clergy to help you.
- **In the absence of a deacon, Get the *Book of Gospels* at 10 minutes** prior to the beginning of the service and prepare to process in with it. If, however, you are not able to carry the *Book of Gospels*, ask the sacristan to place it in the altar before the Mass starts.

- **Gather** in the narthex at **5 minutes** prior to the beginning of the service to join the Presider and other religious and lay ministers for prayer.

At the Sacristan's or Presider's directions move to the back of the center aisle to begin.

FUNCTIONS OF THE LECTOR

INTRODUCTORY RITES

1. In the procession to the altar, when no deacon is present, the lector, wearing the appropriate vesture, *or other appropriate and dignified clothing*,⁽³⁾ may carry the *Book of the Gospels* elevated slightly if he is physically able to do so. In that case, the lector walks in front of the priest, otherwise with the other ministers (194).
2. Upon reaching the altar, since *the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself*. If a minister is physically unable to genuflect, a profound bow of the head will suffice. However, if the lector is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, he does not genuflect but goes to the altar and places the *Book of the Gospels* on it. Then, the lector takes up a position in the sanctuary with the other ministers (195) or finds his place with the assembly.

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 approaches the altar, makes a profound bow and goes to the ambo, gently adjusts the

microphone 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).
- He goes down to the front of the altar, and makes a profound bow to the altar with the psalmist.
- The psalmist sings or recites the psalm verse and, as a rule, the congregation makes the response (129). If there is no psalmist, the lector may also sing or recite the responsorial psalm after the first reading (196).
- If there is a second reading before the Gospel, the lector approaches the altar, makes a profound bow with the psalmist and proclaims the reading from the ambo with all listening and making the acclamation at the end, as above (128). Then, as the occasion allows, a brief period of silence may be observed (130).
- He goes to the front of the sanctuary and makes a profound bow before he returns to his place among the assembly.
- After the priest gives the introduction to the *General Intercessions*, the lector may announce the intentions from the ambo when no deacon is present (197). He approaches and venerates the altar in the same manner as the previous.
- If there is no opening liturgical song or communion song and the antiphons in the Missal are not said by the faithful, the lector may recite them at the appropriate time (198).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- At the conclusion of the Mass, the lector does not process with the *Book of the Gospels*. The Lectionary is never carried in procession. The lector may join in the procession at the end of Mass in the same order as in the procession to the altar.

All subsequent citations are from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, unless otherwise noted.

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PASTORAL NOTES

1. Lectors at Mass are encouraged to dress in suit and tie for men or dress for women. Lectors are encouraged to dress in their "Sunday best" for the ministry (this includes pants suit for women). And, all too casual or "dress down" look is to be avoided.
2. If at all possible, a minister is to perform only one ministry at any given Mass. For example, a lector should not serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at a Mass in which he/she reads unless their service as an EMoHC is absolutely needed.
3. The coordinator prepares the schedule in advance and provides this schedule to the lectors. Two lectors should be scheduled to serve at each Mass.
4. In the previous guidelines, it was stated that only the deacon can process in with the *Book of Gospels*. The *General Instructions of the Roman Missal, paragraph 194* states otherwise,

“In the procession to the altar, in the absence of a Deacon, the (1st) reader, wearing approved attire, may carry the *Book of Gospels*, slightly elevated.”

 We will move forward with the latter instruction. If the lector is physically unable to carry the *Book of Gospels*, it is placed on the altar before the Mass begins.

5. When do we bow and when do we genuflect at Mass?

The GIRM (n. 298) reminds us of the ancient tradition of seeing the altar as representing Christ, the Living Stone (cf. 1 Peter 2:4). Because of this association, a bow of the body is prescribed as the normal gesture made toward the altar, as if toward Christ himself. For example, all the ministers bow toward the altar at the beginning of Mass and at the end of Mass unless the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary. In our case, since the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, a genuflection is the proper gesture unless you are carrying the Book of Gospels.

If the lector is physically unable to genuflect, a profound bow will suffice.

The genuflection, seen as a sign of adoration, is reserved for the Eucharist as well as for the cross between its solemn veneration on Good Friday and the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

During the celebration of Mass, however, as when the lector goes up to read, he does not genuflect to the tabernacle but reverences the altar with a profound bow. Outside the celebration of Mass, it is appropriate to genuflect whenever passing in front of the tabernacle.

In addition to these two gestures of respect, reverence, and adoration, the kiss is also used to honor the altar and the Book of the Gospels (n. 273).

6. When there is only one lector, he will return to his seat after the 1st reading and returns to the ambo after the Responsorial Psalm to do the 2nd reading.

7. When a reading is proclaimed, no other introduction is necessary other than the introduction traditionally presented. For example, the reader does not say, "the first reading is from..." or "the second reading" or "the Responsorial Psalm," Also, any words of explanation of the readings are not read. The lector simply states: "a reading from the ..." or "a reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians".

8. When proclaiming the Word of God, lectors should make sure they are close enough to the microphone to be heard clearly. Try to make eye contact when appropriate.
9. When the reading is concluded, the lector simply says: "the Word of the Lord," even though the printed text may have additional words as "This is the Word of the Lord."
10. Do not remove the ribbon from its location. This will help the next lector find the correct place. After the 1st reading, Lector 1 leaves the Lectionary open on the ambo if there is to be a 2nd reading.

After the 2nd reading, Lector 2 closes the Lectionary and places it inside the podium.

11. If you are scheduled to read on the vigil of a solemnity or feast day, always check with the church's liturgist or pastor during the week on the proper readings for the vigil Mass.
12. On some celebrations, the Lectionary offers two or more options on the readings. Please check with the church's liturgist or pastor during the week on the choice of readings for the celebration.
13. When new lectors have been added, a new phone list will go out. If you are unable to read on your assigned day and time, you can call another lector on the list or ask your partner to take your reading.

You do not have to call your coordinator unless you can find no one to read for you.