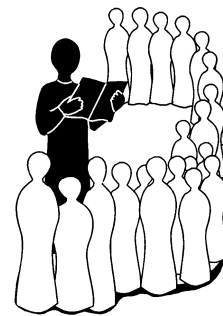


Practical Guidelines for Ministers of the Word



Preparation during the Week

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your minds regarding the passages to be read.
2. Read the Sunday texts in the following order: Gospel, First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading. Read them aloud and jot down any words that 'jump out' at you. If there are any words that you do not know how to pronounce, check the pronunciation guide.
3. Read the passages in context. (E.g. if you are reading a section from Ch. 3 of St. Paul's letter to the Colossians, read the whole chapter, so that you have a clear understanding of what St. Paul was writing about.)
4. Read some background on the sacred writer and the book (e.g. www.lectorprep.org). If possible, consult a biblical commentary for further insight.
5. Sit with the readings for several days: What is the Good News that is being proclaimed here? How does this Word of God call me to conversion or change? What image of God is being presented here? What does it tell me about God; about God's plan for humankind; about me as I live out my own particular circumstances?
6. During the week, read the passage aloud a number of times, and check any difficult pronunciations. Work out where you are going to pause or put emphasis – and practise reading in front of the mirror, so that you can develop good eye contact techniques.

What to do on Sunday

1. Arrive at the church at least 10 mins before Mass is due to begin. It is good if there is a quiet place where the ministers gather, so that you can prepare yourselves properly. Check that the microphone is correctly adjusted and that the Lectionary is open at the correct page. Confirm with the cantor/choir that the Psalm is to be sung.
 2. If the parish owns a copy of the Book of the Gospels, it will be carried in during the Entrance procession. (The new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* does not allow the Lectionary to be carried in procession.) If you are carrying the Book of the Gospels, walk immediately in front of the presiding priest and hold it as high as comfortably possible. When all ministers have revered the altar, go directly to the altar and place the Gospel Book (closed) on the altar (facing the assembly) and then return to your place in the assembly.
 3. After the Opening Prayer, the first reader goes unhurriedly to the edge of the sanctuary. Bow towards the altar and then proceed to the lectern.
 4. Wait a few seconds so that the people have time to settle in their seats and focus their attention. Don't rush straight into the reading or begin while the children are still going to their own Liturgy of the Word. Take a deep breath – this both helps the reading and calms the nerves.
1. a) Read exactly what is printed when announcing the reading, i.e. "A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians," NOT "The first reading is a reading from...." Look up while announcing the reading. This helps to engage the community with the reader.
b) Do not read aloud the summary statement that is printed in red just below the heading.

Pause slightly between announcing the reading and beginning to read.

5. There is no need for any comment from the commentator during the Liturgy of the Word. The readings will speak for themselves if they are properly proclaimed.
6. Always read from a Lectionary, not from a loose sheet of paper (or at least not one that is visible), or even a daily missal. The Lectionary gives a quality of permanence and respect to the Word of God which throw-away leaflets do not convey.
7. Proclamation should be clear and deliberate, loud enough to carry to all parts of the church, and slightly slower than normal speech. Your careful preparation beforehand ensures that you pause at the right places, especially at the end of sentences.
8. It helps to engage the assembly if you can make eye contact several times in the course of the reading. The most effective way to do this is to look up when emphasising important words or phrases or at the end of a sentence. Include this habit when you are practising at home so that it will come more easily on the day.
9. Be natural! Don't assume any affectation or accent that is not your own.
10. Do not drop your voice at the ends of sentences or readings. At the end of the reading, say clearly "The Word of the Lord" while looking at the assembly, since you are inviting their response.
11. After the people have made their response ("Thanks be to God") wait at the lectern for a few moments of silence, as instructed by the liturgy documents. This silence should occur after the First and Second Reading, and after the Homily. In this silence the people "grasp the word of God by the heart and prepare a response through prayer" (GIRM #56).
12. At the end of the pause for silent reflection, step down from the lectern and walk quietly back to your place in the assembly. The cantor comes forward at the same time (See No. 3 above with regard to bowing.)
13. The Responsorial Psalm should be sung, at least as far as the people's response is concerned. If the cantor is going to lead the people in the antiphon while the reader reads the verses, then the cantor can either stand next to the reader at the lectern or lead from some other convenient place. If the cantor is going to sing the verses, then the reader returns to the body of the church and the cantor takes his/her place at the lectern.
14. When the Psalm is said it is imperative the response is led each time by the lector. As soon as the verse is read the lector pauses for a moment and then leads the response. People often forget what it is and need to be led!
NB Never say the word "response".
15. The second reader comes forward during the singing of the last response to the psalm.
16. Do not ask people to stand for the Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia). They will do that as soon as they hear it being introduced either by the organ or the cantor. The Alleluia verse is always to be sung. If it cannot be sung the verse may be omitted (LMI #23, GIRM # 62, 63.)
17. The person announcing the petitions of the Prayers of the Faithful can do so from the ambo (lectern/pulpit) or another suitable place. There should be a short pause between the petition itself and requesting the community to pray. The one stating the intentions should not return

to his/her place until the presider has prayed the concluding prayer.

18. At the conclusion of Mass, go to the edge of the sanctuary and wait until all ministers are in place before making a reverence (bow) to the altar and processing out. Remember, the Book of the Gospels is not carried out in procession.

Reading Technique

19. Proclamation is done with the voice, but listening is done with the heart. At proclaimers we must enable this kind of listening to take place.
20. Know your 'vocal apparatus'. The lips, tongue and teeth all contribute to the voice. Use these elements of your vocal apparatus to provide clear speech.
21. Posture and breathing contribute significantly to good proclamation. Always begin by taking a deep breath and exhaling it completely. Then begin your reading.
22. Open your mouth! Too often readers have 'lazy lips', making it difficult for listeners to really hear what is being said.

Further Comments

23. Always show respect for the Book of the Word (either Lectionary or Book of the Gospels). Never put the Lectionary on the floor when room must be made at the lectern for the Book of the Gospels. The way we treat these books indicates the value we place on the Word they represent.
24. Readers need to reflect the importance of their ministry by dressing neatly and appropriately.
25. The Book of Blessings contains an Order for the blessing of Readers (Ch. 61) which can be used whenever installing new readers.
26. If possible, pair up with another reader who usually comes to the same Mass as you, so that you have a "Reading Partner." You can be for each other a "caring critic", giving feedback about the other's proclamation.
27. Resolve to become more deeply conversant with the Word of God, reading from the Scriptures for a few minutes each day, even when you are not rostered to read on the following Sunday.
28. FINALLY: Those who are Ministers of the Word are called to witness in their lives what they proclaim in the assembly. "Be doers of the word and not merely hearers," (James 1:22)