



The Ministry of Lector
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Handbook 2011

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The Proclamation of the Word

Thank you for participating in the ministry of Lector at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. This ministry is vital to the worshipping community, as you are sharing God's Word with those around you. By baptism you are called to share this Word with others at home, at work, in your neighborhood and in every place you are able. Chosen by the Christian community to proclaim this word in the church's Worship, you will strengthen the faith of believers and enable them to spread the word of God more effectively wherever they live, work and play. May the Word and the Holy Spirit, touch you in your ministry, and in so doing touch all that listen as you proclaim.

Spirituality

"[The Lector] exercise[s] a genuine liturgical function. They ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people. Consequently they must all be imbued with the spirit of the liturgy...and they must be trained to perform their function in a correct and orderly manner" (CSL, 29).

The Lector combines faith with skill when reading the Scriptures. The Lector is a minister, rather than just a reader. Your ministry as Lector, like that of the priest, is responsible for affecting the presence of God among the Christians gathered in worship. Just as the priest affects the special presence of God in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Lector affects the presence of God in the scriptural Word.

This concept of ministry is extremely important for Lectors. Without it, one may see oneself as a performer before a captive audience. In a way, the Lector plays a special role in the religious "drama" called Eucharist. Lectors have "scripts" and "cues," and are called upon to employ public speaking skills. However, we as Lectors – as ministers of the Word – are servants to the people of God, not performers.

In the sections that follow you will be presented with various elements of communication technique, along with some practical things you can do to enhance your skills.

Some Basic Communication Techniques

- A. **Body Language:** The primary purpose of the Lector is to proclaim the Word. This proclamation begins even before a single word is spoken. Dress, posture, and movement all convey a message. Give attention, therefore to the following points:
1. Dress appropriately (not drab or showy and please, no jeans, shorts, halter tops, sweatshirts, t-shirts with logos or writing, or tennis shoes). Also, outerwear (coats/jackets) should be removed before approaching the ambo.
 2. Approach the ambo with authority and confidence.
 3. Have books, papers, etc. arranged prior to Mass to avoid fumbling and shuffling at the ambo.
 4. Stand erect. Do not lean into the microphone. Place weight evenly on both feet. Check the position of the microphone before Mass begins. At the ambo, it is necessary that the microphone is pointing to your nose rather than your mouth.
 5. Know what to do with your hands. Place your hands on the sides of the ambo or place them on the Lectionary. Gestures are not usual during a reading.
 6. Be sure you are ready before starting the reading. Don't rush yourself. The congregation can't go anywhere.
 7. Relax. This is a friendly audience.
 8. During pauses look at the congregation.
 9. All movements should be slow and with reverence, confidence, and authority.
- B. **Vocal Elements** can be summed up in three words **SLOWLY, CLEARLY, and LOUDLY.**
1. **Pace**—the faster you speak, the less you will be understood. This is perhaps the hardest speaking skill to master. Almost half a normal conversation speed is correct. Finish a word before starting the next one. This sounds simple but it isn't. It takes practice and it takes someone else to tell you if your words are clear and understood.
 2. **Articulation**—if you speak slowly, this can be easy. Finish the word. Pronounce the endings—all t's, d's, m's etc. The same applies to the beginning of words. You will find that finishing a word gives you time to get to the next one or to change expressions or emphasis. Beware of the explosive sounds—the p's and b's. They can 'pop' over the sound system especially if you are too close to the microphone. The weak and strong forms of "a" and "the" can make a reading sound stilted when improperly used. The strong "thee" is used before words beginning with a vowel—thee apple, thee egg. Otherwise, the weak "uh" sound

is used. The strong “a” sound, as in may, is rarely used. It usually means “one” as in (one) “ay” book. Otherwise, the weak “uh” sound is used.

3. **Volume** – the microphone is obviously a big help. Remember, however, that you must maintain a proper distance from the microphone to sustain a good sound level. Despite the presence of amplification, controlled projection of the voice with breathing from the diaphragm is worthwhile for the production of rich full tones. Check with someone in the congregation periodically, to see if you have appropriate volume for delivery. **Even if a microphone is used the Lector must project.** If you rely on the microphone to carry the sound you may be heard but you will not be understood. If you are not understood that means the Word of God is not being heard.
4. **Pitch Level** – it has been found by researchers that Americans, in general, speak well below the pitch that is healthiest according to the size of their vocal cords. The healthiest pitch level is said to be the level at which one begins a sigh.

C. Visual and Speaking Elements:

1. **Eye Contact** – Eye contact is an important tool that is used to engage the congregation in a real dialogue with the Word. However, it can be more of a distraction than help if poorly used. Eye contact is not very meaningful if you simply use it for a single word, or if you use it in the middle of a sentence. It is most effective when used for the last few words or the last phrase of a sentence. If used in this way it can serve as an invitation of the congregation to get involved in what they hear.
2. **Stress and Phrasing** – if we are to convey the meaning of a reading, we cannot speak every word in exactly the same way. Words are grouped together in phrases. We linger over a particular word to demonstrate its importance. Perhaps our pitch rises slightly to emphasize a word or two. Or perhaps the pause best conveys a meaning you are trying to present.

Step-by-Step Procedural Guide

1. Schedules are mailed to all ministers as necessary. Should you misplace your schedule during its term, there are extras from the Director of Liturgy or the Cathedral Parish's website (www.stjohncathedral.org).
2. Be conscientious on following through with your assignment. **If you are not able to make your assigned date or time, it is your responsibility to get a replacement.** A list of Lectors with their phone numbers has been provided. Phone the Director of Liturgy for a replacement only after you have failed in an honest attempt to get a replacement yourself. Try to contact the replacement or the Director of Liturgy before Saturday. If you know in advance of the next schedule that there are dates you are not available, please let the Director of Liturgy know so that your circumstances can be taken into account as the schedule is drawn up.
3. Preparation (See also *Preparation for Proclamation* on page 10 of this booklet): Preparation is required no matter how good a public speaker you are in any setting. If you are not prepared, disaster may wait. Make use of a dictionary and a pronunciation guide. There are guides for the pronunciation of Biblical names available from the Director of Liturgy. If you do not understand what you are saying or use a pronunciation that is incorrect, the listener may not understand the proper message. Use the Bible to check the context of the passage you are proclaiming. Look at what precedes and follows the passage. This can aid in understanding the meaning of your text. As part of your preparation, "pray" your reading. Use it for mediation. Remember it is the Word of God.

When facing the unexpected, keep your cool. Remember that this is a friendly audience. If you mispronounce, insert or transpose a word, don't let it upset you. Don't stop and say, "Excuse me." Keep right on going. If you misread a word or a phrase, for example "immortality" for "immorality," correct yourself. Do it slowly and without embarrassment. You may want to go back and reread the whole sentence if there has been a complete confusion about the passage. **Relax and do the best you can!**

 - A. Use your *Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers* at home for practice.
 - B. Mark up the readings in any way that is helpful for you.
 - C. Use the readings for prayer and meditation.
 - D. Check a Bible to see what went before and what comes after your readings. Context can give you a clue as to meanings.

- E. State the readings in your own words. What statement of your faith can you make based on the readings?
 - F. Use a dictionary if helpful. Make sure the meaning of the reading is clear to you before you proclaim.
4. As previously stated, care should be taken to give a dressed-up appearance consistent with the importance of the task at hand and the reverence called for in proclaiming the Word of God. Therefore, no jeans or shorts, please. Lectors should keep in mind that although they are to present a dressed-up appearance, they are not to be dressed in such a way that they would be a distraction to hearing the Word of God. Please consider the sensibilities of others. Please use common sense.

Before Mass:

5. **Arrive 20 minutes prior to your scheduled Mass in the Vesting Sacristy.** After checking in (on the stand outside the Vesting Sacristy), look over the readings one last time in the Lectionary. Know where they are in it and on the page. You should be familiar with them from your preparation at home; this is just a last minute check. In the Vesting Sacristy you will also find the Prayers of the Faithful (Petitions or Intercessions), which you will also read when assigned. Read them over several times and especially check on the pronunciation of any personal names.
6. You will generally be responsible for the First Reading or Second Reading and the Prayers of the Faithful. Should that be the case, you will be notified ahead of time and will be instructed when this text is proclaimed.
7. Please note: You are never to read from a Missalette or your *Lector's Workbook*. The symbol of the book is very important to the liturgy. The current *Lectionary* is a "sense line" edition with phrases printed in lines in a way that facilitates the transmission of the message. The Lectionary should remain closed until just before the first reading.

During Mass:

8. The Lector of the first reading will carry the *Book of the Gospels* in procession (in the absence of a Deacon). Process behind the server(s) and the second lector at a distance of approximately 2 to 3 rows of chairs. Carry the *Book of the Gospels* at shoulder level about 6 inches in front of you with the front side facing forward. This position allows your upper arms to be lowered, with your elbows bent. You may carry the *Book of the*

Gospels higher if you choose but never lower. Never carry it at waist level. The *Book of the Gospels* should always be held erect, never let it lie backwards or forward.

9. When the second reading (first in procession) lector reaches the altar, turn north and continue to gold diamond to the north of the altar and wait to reverence with the other ministers. When the first reading (second in procession) lector reaches the sanctuary go directly to the altar to place the *Book of the Gospels* in the **middle of the altar without bowing**. The front of the *Book of the Gospels* should be facing the congregation. Once you have placed the book on the altar, exit to the gold diamond on the south of the altar and wait to reverence with the other ministers. Once all ministers are in their place around the altar, they will reverence the altar together with a profound bow. At the conclusion of the reverence, procedure to your place in the assembly.

Please note: If the deacon is carrying the *Book of the Gospels* both lectors proceed to the same gold diamond (to the north) for reverencing the altar.

10. After the opening prayer, the Lector should wait a brief moment before approaching the pulpit to proclaim the First Reading. The reason for this pause is to let the people be settled in order that **the Word may be heard**. You should now open the closed book. If people are still fidgeting, wait until things are settled to begin reading.
11. After the completion of the each reading; then the Lector pauses and adds "**The Word of the Lord.**" He/she returns to his/her seat. The cantor approaches the ambo to proclaim the psalm in song.
12. Do not insert comments about the reading, or whether it is the "first" or "second" reading. Simply say "**A reading from ...**"
13. When the Lector has finished the second reading he/she is to close the *Lectionary* and **slide it to the left side of the Ambo**. The celebrant will bring the *Book of the Gospels* to the ambo during the Gospel Acclamation.
14. **During the final sentences of the Profession of Faith, the Lector assigned approaches the ambo to lead the Prayers of the Faithful** (intercessions or petitions) – the presider will introduce the petitions. After you have finished the last petition of the Prayers of the Faithful remain standing at the pulpit and direct your attention

toward the presider. **Wait for him to conclude the Prayers of the Faithful before you return to your place in the assembly.**

15. Announcements are made by the presider/Archbishop.
16. At the completion of the Liturgy you should first process to the same diamond that you started to reverence the altar. Then process out with the presider and the servers in the same order as you processed in.

A Reminder:

As a liturgical minister you lead all the actions and prayers of the people. It is important that you actively participate in all the songs and prayers. This means that you should use a hymnal and should, by your physical attentiveness, direct the attention of the congregation to the central action or the ritual. All movements should be deliberate and reverent, bespeaking the significance of the role of the Lector.

Thank You

Thank you for offering your time and talent as a Lector at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Director of Liturgy.

Preparation for Proclamation

Monday

1. Read the selection silently several times.
2. Let it settle.
3. Pray with the text.
4. Ask yourself:
 - a. How does this passage affect my life?
 - b. What does this mean for proclamation?

Tuesday

1. Read the selection silently several times.
2. Pray with the text.
3. Understand the selection.
 - a. Know the pronunciation of the words.
 - b. Know the meaning of the words.
 - c. Know the meaning of the phrases/reading.
 - d. Understand the 3 literary forms: *Story, Letter or Epistle, or Poetry.*
4. Remember: *it is the living being that comes to life through your breath.*

Wednesday

1. Practice the selection(s) out loud.
2. Pray with the text.
3. Remember:
 - a. Voice Quality: nice, not grating or irritating.
 - b. Volume: you must be heard by everyone, do not mumble
 - c. Diction: speak clearly and distinctly. Do not emphasize prepositions, but rather action words.
 - d. Range of Voice: Use a wide range of voices to set apart thoughts, phrases and oral punctuation.
 - e. Pace: Read slowly unless the passage calls for otherwise.
 - f. Pausing: Prior to the end of the reading, look up at the assembly, pause and proclaim: "The Word of the Lord."
 - g. Rhythm: Use a combination of stressed and unstressed words.
 - h. Intonation: Be sure that you use an appropriate tone of voice.
 - i. Eye Contact: Look at the congregation at appropriate intervals, making personal contact. This means making personal contact with the listeners,

not just eye contact. If looking at someone directly in their eyes causes you to “fumble,” then look at the top of their head.

Thursday

1. Read the passage(s) silently.
2. Read the passage(s) out loud.
3. Pray with the passage(s).

Friday

1. Read the passage(s) silently.
2. Read the passage(s) out loud.
3. Pray with the passage(s).