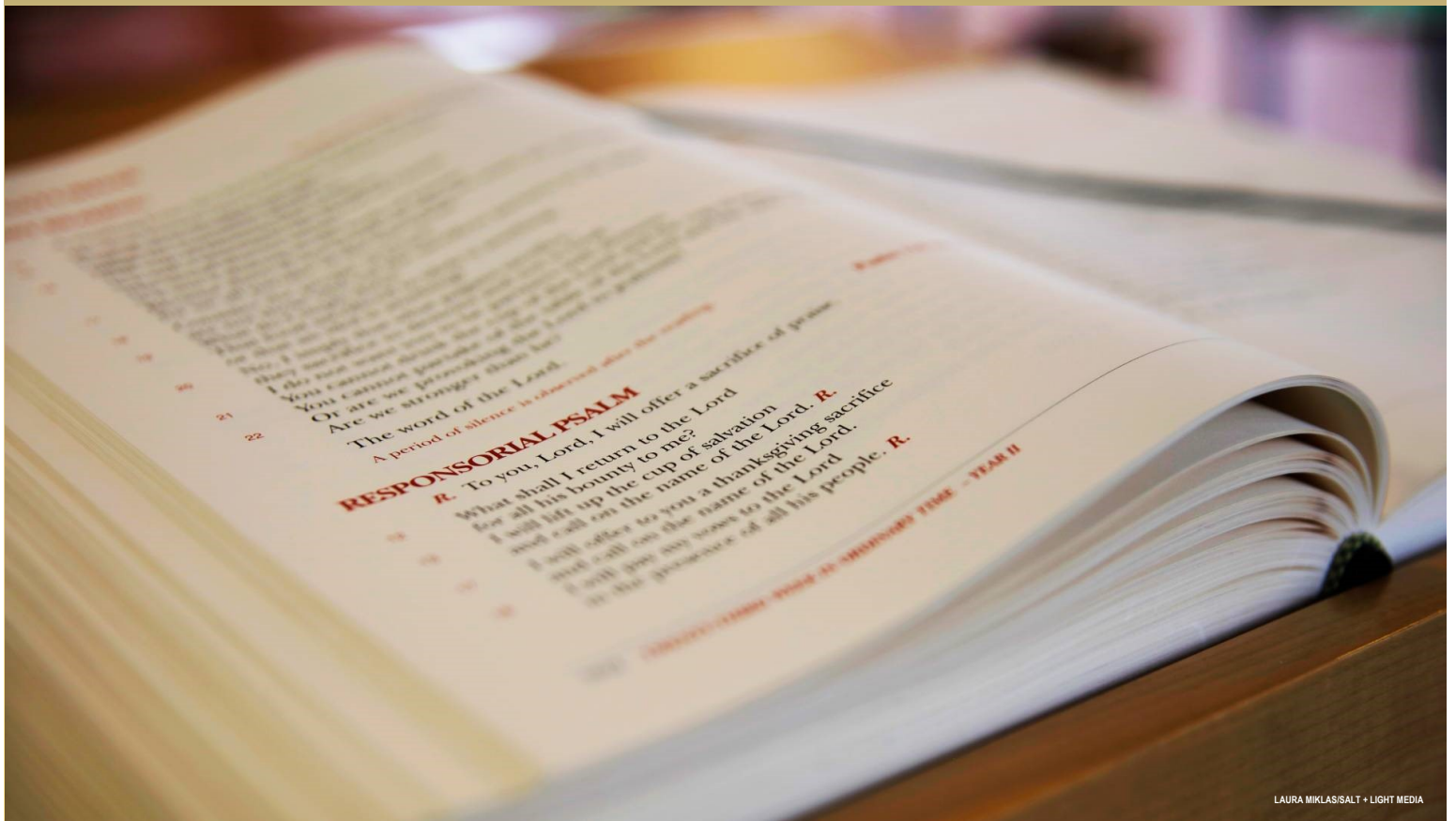


Proclaiming the Message of Salvation

A GUIDE FOR LECTORS



"God of power and compassion, in Christ you reveal your will to heal and to save. Open our ears to your redeeming Word and move our hearts by the strength of your love, so that our every word and work may proclaim as Messiah, Jesus the Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen" (Opening Prayer for the Rite of Recognition for Lectors).

The Ministry of Lector: Introduction Introduction

The Pastoral Plan of the Archdiocese of Toronto (www.archtoronto.org/pastoral) envisions the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful at Mass. It further envisions the engagement of parishioners in various ministries within the parish community: "Our aim is to fully engage all parishioners in parish life in accordance with their stewardship of God's gifts. The parish will be encouraged to promote and develop a variety of ministries and initiatives which support the celebration of the Sunday liturgy...."

The Pastoral Plan highlights the importance of having qualified lay people assisting in the liturgical life of the parish. Of note is the importance of ensuring the training and formation of lectors "so that they may proclaim the words of Scripture well."

It is our hope that this document provides some assistance in helping to form lectors in the parish community so that they may be qualified to serve in their role, supported in it, and be given the tools to grow closer in their relationship with the Word of God, Jesus Christ.

What is a Lector?

"Lay persons can fulfill the function of lector in liturgical actions by temporary designation" (*Code of Canon Law*, 230 §2). In this role, they "proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel..., announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer, and recite the Psalm between the readings." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, [GIRM] 99). This document relates specifically to temporarily deputed lectors in a parish. There are certain unique

situations, such as school Masses, weddings, and funerals, that have different requirements than the ones that will be noted in this document. If you have further questions please contact the Office of Formation for Discipleship or the Office of Spiritual Affairs.

The Lectionary and the Cycle of Readings

The Lectionary

"The pastoral advantage of having in the Roman Rite a single Order of Readings for the Lectionary is obvious on other grounds. All the faithful, particularly those who for various reasons do not always take part in Mass with the same assembly, will everywhere be able to hear the same readings on any given day or in any liturgical season and to meditate on the application of these readings in their own concrete circumstances" (*Introduction to the Lectionary*, 61-2).

"The present structure of the Lectionary not only presents the more important texts of Scripture with some frequency, but also helps us to understand the unity of God's plan thanks to the interplay of the Old and New Testament readings..." (*Verbum Domini*, 57).

The Word of God is properly proclaimed from the Lectionary. While missalettes, lector workbooks, photocopies or apps can be most helpful for lectors during their preparations, they should not replace the use of the Lectionary during the liturgy. Practically, this is because it ensures that the text being read is the proper text for use in the dioceses of Canada. It is also because there is a dignity that is afforded to the proclamation of the Word of God and that means the book those words are written in has dignity as well. To read from something other than the Lectionary makes it seem as if the proclamation of Scripture is just like reading any other text, which it is not.

Cycle of Readings

The Lectionary is structured in a way that lays out Scripture to us over the course of time, taking into account the nature of the liturgical year of the Church, which runs from the First Sunday of Advent to the Feast of Christ the King.

The Church year is broken up into Liturgical seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. Each of those seasons helps us grow more deeply into the mystery of Christ and each season has a 'flavour' that is reflected in the assigned readings.

The season of Ordinary Time runs between the end of the Christmas Season and Lent and from the end of the Easter Season to the start of Advent. It is here that we hear most of the stories with which we've grown up. It is a time to hear about and grow into the daily work of a Christian.

There are two main cycles of readings: Sundays and Solemnities, and Weekdays. Additionally, there are cycles of Saints days and votive Masses.

Sundays and Solemnities

"Sundays and festive days present the more important biblical passages. In this way the more significant parts of God's revealed word can be read to the assembled faithful within an appropriate period of time" (*Introduction to the Lectionary*, 65).

The readings are on a three-year cycle and generally a different evangelist corresponds to the year: Matthew for year A, Mark and John for year B, and Luke for year C.

There are three readings, one normally from the Old Testament, a psalm selection, one from the New Testament (normally an Epistle, but sometimes from the Book of Acts or the Book of Revelation), and a selection from the Gospel.

Weekday Readings

Weekday Masses have a Reading from the Old or New Testament, a psalm, and a Gospel. The Gospel reading is on a single cycle, which means that the same liturgical day every year will have the same Gospel reading. The readings, however, are on a two-year cycle, I and II and in Ordinary time the readings will change to reflect that cycle. Year I is the odd numbered years and Year II is the even years.

Lent has its own arrangement that takes into account its baptismal and penitential nature. Advent, Christmas, and Easter are on

yearly cycles and the readings remain the same each year.

Other Cycles

Throughout the Church year other liturgical events arise that may be reflected in the Lectionary.

The first place this may arise is for saints' days. The Proper of Saints includes proper readings for Solemnities, Feasts, and Memorials. The Commons of Saints includes readings for various classes of saints: martyrs, pastors, virgins, etc.

There is also a Lectionary for Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead. Here the texts are grouped together based on category, much like they are in the Commons of Saints.

The Liturgy of the Word

"The Mass consists in some sense of two parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, *these being so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship*. For in the Mass is spread the table both of God's word and of the Body of Christ, from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed." (*GIRM*, 28)

The Lectionary is a sacred object. It is the place where the Word of God is written so that we might proclaim it to the People of God. It is not like any other book that we might read from, and so we need to be careful how we treat it.

The ambo should provide a sufficient stand for the Lectionary so that it does not need to be held by the lector. Further, we do not need to move the Lectionary around as we read and we do not need to elevate the Lectionary after we have read to "show" it to the people. God is made present in the proclamation of Scripture not in the book itself.

What about the Entrance Procession?

In a Mass without a Deacon, a reader may carry The *Book of Gospels* (not the Lectionary), slightly elevated, in the Entrance Procession (cf. *GIRM* no. 120)

The First and Second Readings

"In the readings, the table of God's Word is spread before the faithful, and the treasures of the Bible are opened to them" (*GIRM*, 57).

The First Reading is almost always from the Old Testament. It is properly proclaimed by a lector. In any Mass where lay people are present but no deputed lector, a qualified lay person is to read the lesson.

During the Easter Season the first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. On other days, the first reading might be from an Epistle or the book of Revelation.

The Second Reading is always from the New Testament.

The Responsorial Psalm

"After the First Reading follows the Responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and which has great liturgical and pastoral importance, since it fosters meditation on the Word of God" (*GIRM*, 61). This can also be said if there is no one available to sing it. Ideally, on Sundays and Solemnities it is sung.

The Gospel Acclamation

"After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the Alleluia or another chant laid down by the rubrics is sung, as the liturgical time requires. An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the gathering of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and profess their faith by means of the chant" (*GIRM*, 62).

The Book of Gospels is an Icon of Christ. It is venerated because the very words of Christ are being spoken to the People of God. That is why it is carried in procession. The carrying of the *Book of Gospels* in procession is part of the earliest liturgical tradition of the Church. It is placed on the altar which shows the link between and importance of the two tables, the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist.

Summary of the Norms and Policies for Lectors

When it comes to the practical exercise of the ministry of Lector, there are norms and policies from the Universal Church and the Archdiocese of Toronto.

What follows is a summary of those norms and policies as they pertain to the Catholic faithful. For further details about these norms and practices, please contact the Office of Spiritual Affairs at spiritual@archtoronto.org or at 416-934-0606. If you have questions about these norms as they apply in your parish, please speak with your lector coordinator or pastor.

- 1** The lector should be publicly commissioned by his/her pastor according to the rite found in *Celebrations of Installation and Recognition*.
- 2** The minimum age to be a lector is 18.
- 3** To be a lector, a person must be fully initiated in the Catholic Church (i.e., having received Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion).
- 4** To be a lector, a person must be in full communion with the Catholic Church. This includes (but is not limited to) regular Mass attendance, regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and, if married, be in an ecclesiastically valid marriage.
- 5** It is expected that lay ministers serving at Mass, such as lectors, acolytes, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, only fulfill one liturgical ministry at any particular liturgy.
- 6** A lector must be devoted to and understand the importance of the liturgical celebrations of the Church community and the importance of the Liturgy of the Word within the whole celebration of the Sacraments.
- 7** A lector should have an understanding of the structure of the Lectionary used for the liturgy.
- 8** A lector should have the ability to speak the biblical Word intelligibly and comfortably in front of the assembly.
- 9** A lector must have the approval of his/her pastor to exercise this ministry.

Best Practices for the Public Proclamation of Sacred Scripture

While a lector is not an actor and is not giving a dramatic reading or speech, they are tasked with proclaiming the Word of God in public. It is a necessary part of the ministry of lector then to be able to read well in public. This ensures that the Word of God may be heard and understood by those gathered. It is also important that the Lector remember that in proclaiming the Word of God Jesus Christ is being proclaimed.

What follows is a very brief set of best practices to help with public speaking. If you would like more information, please contact the Office of Formation for Discipleship at formation@archtoronto.org or 416.534.3400 ext 523.

Verbal and Non Verbal Communication

Verbal Communication

BREATH CONTROL

- ▶ Many other "issues" that come with reading anything out loud often find their source in problems with breath control. When we aren't breathing well, we tend to speed up, so we don't run out of air, and as we do, we tend to trail off at the end of what we are reading.
- ▶ Proper posture is essential for having good breath control. Standing up straight allows you to breathe from your diaphragm.
- ▶ Be sure to take advantage of natural places to breathe in the text. This is better achieved if you review the selection of Sacred Scripture before you are at the ambo.

VOCAL VARIETY

- ▶ Monotone reading is hard to listen to and is often seen as boring.
- ▶ Vocal variety helps ensure that the Word is not being tuned out because it is monotone.
- ▶ Variation in pitch and inflection (for example, it is okay to read a question as a question, with an upward inflection) will help ensure that the listener is engaged fully. This is better achieved if you review the selection of Sacred Scripture and practice before you're scheduled to serve as a lector.

- ▶ Avoid dramatic readings. The ministry of lector is one of proclamation, but care must be taken not to turn the proclamation into a performance.

EMPHASIS AND STRESS

- ▶ What words are emphasized and given stress in reading will greatly shape how people who are listening interpret what is being said. It is important to pay attention to the words we emphasize and stress.
- ▶ A lector guide will often provide helpful tips for what words could be stressed in the proclamation of Scripture.
- ▶ It is important to reflect on the meaning of the text and to read in such a way that what is emphasized reflects that meaning.
- ▶ Practice prior to public proclamation is essential.
- ▶ Avoid upward inflections that indicate questions when reading, unless you are reading a question. This should especially be avoided when saying "The Word of the Lord".

SPEED

- ▶ Some people read too quickly when they are reading out loud. The only way you'll know if this is happening is to practice and have someone tell you honestly about your speed.
- ▶ It is important to remember that there are people of various hearing abilities in the congregation, and speaking too quickly is a common concern.
- ▶ Speaking too quickly leads to words being slurred and in general, not being understood.
- ▶ Read slower than your normal speaking pace, but be sure not to read so slowly that the congregation stops listening.

SPEECH CLARITY

- ▶ Speaking so that the Word of God may be heard with clarity is important.
- ▶ Enunciate, speak deliberately, and don't slur your words.
- ▶ Speak at an appropriate volume. What that is will depend on the sound system in the parish and will require practice.

► Sometimes a word will be mispronounced, missed altogether, or it is possible some other "mistake" will happen when you're reading. If that happens, do not draw attention to the mistake. The chances are slim that people will notice a mispronounced word unless you draw attention to it by trying to correct it. For larger "mistakes" such as reading the wrong reading, speak with your Lector Coordinator or Pastor at your initial training to see how they would like you to handle that issue.

PROJECTION

► Even with sound systems, it is important to project your voice. Practice with your sound system to learn how far you need to be from the microphone and the volume at which you need to speak.

Nonverbal Communication POSTURE

► Correct posture not only helps in verbal communication, but it also helps show that what is being proclaimed (the Word of God) is important.

► Stand up straight, it not only helps with projection, but it highlights the dignity and importance of what is being done. It also makes you easier to see over the ambo.

EYE CONTACT

► It is hard to understand people who read and never look up.

► Eye contact is a way to help those listening feel engaged.

► Eye contact, however, should not be fleeting. It is important to look up for more than a word of the text. To do that requires practice.

► However, if you cannot look up for a longer period of time, it is better to not look up at all. Fleeting eye contact is distracting.

HANDS

► How we hold our hands can contribute to how people listen.

► Do not make elaborate gestures as it is distracting.

► When leading the responsorial psalm, large hand gestures indicating when it is time for the congregation to respond serve, more often than not, as a distraction. If read properly, the timing for the response naturally follows.



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