



*Lord, be in my heart and on my lips,  
that I may worthily announce your words of salvation.*

### ***Introduction***

Christ is present in his word. The word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the plan of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in liturgy. The liturgical celebration becomes therefore the continuing, complete and effective presentation of God's word (IL #4). Proclamation of the word of God is truly a service to the Church. Readers bring the living word of God to the assembled faith community. When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people (GIRM #29).

The ministry of the word, therefore, should be treated with great dignity.

*“When this word is proclaimed in the Church and put into living practice, it enlightens the faithful through the working of the Holy Spirit and draws them into the entire mystery of the Lord as a reality to be lived” (IL #47).*

*Note that the Ministers of the Word is addressed as Lector in the Introduction to the Lectionary (IL) and Reader in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM).*

### ***Who Can Serve as a Minister of the Word?***

- According to the ancient tradition and the teaching of the Church, the proclamation of the readings apart from the Gospel is ministerial not presidential. Therefore, the readings are proclaimed by a lay minister and the Gospel by the Deacon, or in his absence, by a priest. (IL #51; GIRM #59)
- The use of two readers – one for each reading – is encouraged. The parish community should strive for enough trained lectors to fulfill this goal (IL #52)
- Effective proclamation involves the delivery of the message with clarity, conviction and appropriate pace. The Word of God is not merely read, it is proclaimed. Proclamation ministry presupposes faith and rouses faith in those who hear the word proclaimed <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guideline for Lector, Archdiocese of Los Angeles #5.

- All liturgical ministers, especially the Ministers of the Word, must be properly trained for their ministry. The lector requires skill in public reading, knowledge for the principles of liturgy, and an understanding and love of the scriptures. Normally, only properly trained and commissioned lectors are scheduled for liturgy (IL #55).
- Readers are baptized Christians whose lives witness to the Word in which they proclaim. On some occasion, with a proper training, a young person who is not yet fully initiated may serve as a reader during a liturgy.

### ***The Liturgy of the Word:***

- In the procession to the altar, the readers follow the Cross and candles and make a profound bow upon reaching the altar. (GIRM #195)
- The readings are always to be read from the ambo. (GIRM #58)
- Periods of silence help to foster a spirit of meditation and should be exercised at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word, after each of the readings and at the end of the Homily (GIRM #56, 128 & IL #28)
- In the absence of a psalmist, the reader may also proclaim the Responsorial Psalm after the First Reading. (GIRM #196).
- In the act of communal listening, the worshippers experience not only unity among themselves but also the presence of Christ speaking to them through the Word. (IL #45). Ideally, members of the assembly listen to the proclamation of the Scriptures. Missals are for the use of those who are hearing-impaired and for those for whom English is not the first language.
- In the absence of a Deacon, the reader may announce the Universal Prayer of the Faithful from the ambo (GIRM #197 & IL #53)

### ***BOOK OF GOSPELS***

(GIRM #117, 120, 122, 173, 175, 194, 195)

Carrying the *Book of Gospels* in procession is one of the ancient traditions of the Church. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the Scriptures. In procession, the *Book of Gospels* is an icon of Christ that demonstrates God's Word as present and visible to the assembled people.

In the opening procession, the *Book of Gospels* is carried by a Deacon. When a Deacon is not present, a reader carries the book and walks in front of the Priest. The book is carried slightly elevated. Otherwise, it is placed on the Altar beforehand.

The reader who carries the *Book of Gospels* omits the bow and lays the book on the Altar. It is placed flat and remains closed.

The movement of the *Book of Gospels* from the Altar to the ambo symbolises that we are nourished by the Word of Christ just as we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ.

Following a time of silence after the Second Reading, the reader removes the Lectionary from the ambo and sets it in an appropriate place of respect.

After the proclamation of the Gospel, the *Book of Gospels* is to be left on the ambo or brought to the credence table or to another suitable place. It is not to be carried out in the procession at the end of Mass.

(INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS #22)

## How to Prepare to Proclaim the Scriptures?

It is necessary that those who exercise the Ministry of Word, even if they have not received institution, be truly qualified and carefully prepared so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Scripture from listening to the sacred texts read. Preparation as a reader must be spiritual, scriptural, liturgical, and technical.

### SPIRITUAL

- Pray over the reading and ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight.
- *Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.* Luke 4:21. What makes for a good hearer of scripture makes for a good proclaimer of scripture.
- Ask what God is saying to you through this reading. What are the implications of this reading for the local community? What are the implications for society at large?
- Ask God to reveal to you which aspects of the reading to emphasize.
- If, through prayer, you have discerned the message, it will come through in your proclaiming.
- Pray for the community who will hear you and ask for God's help in your ministry.

### SCRIPTURAL

- The purpose of biblical formation is to give lectors the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. **(IL #55).**
- Spend time with the reading and read the Bible regularly. Never read publicly what you have not read privately.
- Use a scriptural commentary to understand the context and help you discern the message for today.

Enter a deeper  
relationship  
with God  
revealed in the  
*Sacred Scriptures*  
and bring the  
*printed word*  
to life.

Source: Rosser, Aelred R., Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers (Ottawa: LTP, CCCB, 2002)

### LITURGICAL

- Understand the meaning and structure of the liturgy of the word and of the significance of its connection with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. **(IL #55)**
- We are nourished by "the bread of life . . . from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ." **(DEI VERBUM #21)**
- St Jerome said: We eat the flesh and drink the blood of the divine Saviour in the Holy Eucharist but so do we in the reading of the scriptures.
- The readings culminate in the proclamation of the Gospel, itself a proclamation of the Cross. Read all the readings for that liturgy.
- Hearing the scriptures prepares the assembly to take part in the transformation of the bread and wine of the Eucharist and to be transformed into the ecclesial Body of Christ.

## TECHNICAL

- Once you have studied the reading and prayed over it, plan how you will proclaim it including pacing, pausing, and moments for making eye contact.
- Verify the pronunciation of words, especially Proper nouns that are unfamiliar to you. There are printed and online pronunciation guides.
- Consult a lector workbook for suggestions in emphasis, pausing, and pacing.
- Practice aloud first on your own and then with a critical listener.
- Practice in the space so you are familiar with the microphone and the acoustics. The best proclamation is ineffective if no one can hear you.
- Dress modestly and in a way that will not draw undue attention to yourself.
- Before the liturgy begins, make sure the text is marked correctly.
- Clarify where you sit, when to move, and if you are to carry anything.
- If necessary, adjust the microphone *before* you begin reading.
- Walk reverently and with confidence. Soften your face; liturgy is solemn but it is still Good News!
- Before you begin, take a deep breath, review the first line, and make eye contact. Announce the reading and pause before beginning.
- Read clearly and deliberately. Read generally slowly and use pauses well so that the assembly can take in what they hear. However, respect the flow of phrases and sense units.

### Resources (Print and DVD)

- *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word (Canada)*. <http://www.cccb.publications.ca> (Annual Publication. Highly Recommended)
- Introduction to the Lectionary.
- Rosser, Aelred R., *A Well Trained Tongue: Formation in the Ministry of Reader*.
- Meagher, Virginia. *Guide for Lectors*.
- *Lector and Gospel Reader's Workshop: A Resource for Bringing God's Word to Life*.

### Online Resources

- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) 2011*. <http://nlo.cccb.ca/>
- Implementation Directives for the Diocese of Calgary according to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal 2011*. <http://calgarydiocese.ca/liturgy/>
- *Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)* [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)
- Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops | <http://www.cccb.ca>
- The Sunday Website of St. Louis University | <http://liturgy.slu.edu/> –Weekly liturgical resources corresponding to the Sunday readings.

OFFICE OF LITURGY  
 Diocesan Liturgy Commission  
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary

