

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LECTORS

St. Joseph (Westphalia) and St. Anthony (Folk)

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I. THE ROLE OF LECTOR (READER)

“The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer and, in the absence of a psalmist, recite the Psalm between the readings.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 99)

II. PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

What is the name of this role?

The word “lector” is the Latin word for “reader.” This role is called that of “lector” or “reader,” which are used interchangeably.

The Church does distinguish between *instituted* lectors and those who perform the role of lector by delegation. (see especially *Code of Canon Law*, canon 230; and Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 44) An instituted lector is someone who has been commissioned directly by the bishop in a formal ceremony. “The ministry of reader, conferred through a liturgical rite, must be held in respect. When there are instituted readers available, they are to carry out their office at least on Sundays and festive days, especially at the principal Mass of the day. These readers may also be given responsibility for assisting in the arrangement of the liturgy of the word, and, to the extent necessary, of seeing to the preparation of others of the faithful who may be appointed on a given occasion to read at Mass.” (*General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 51)

Who may perform the function of lector (reader)?

“The liturgical assembly truly requires readers, even those not instituted. Proper measures must therefore be taken to ensure that there are certain suitable laypeople who have been trained to carry out this ministry. Whenever there is more than one reading, it is better to assign the readings to different readers, if available.” (*General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 52)

Lectors should be practicing Catholics, suitably trained, and not living in a situation that would preclude the exercise of public liturgical roles (e.g., not married outside the Church, not a source of public scandal, etc.).

In exceptional circumstances, the diocesan bishop may permit a non-Catholic Christian to proclaim the readings at Mass. (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, no. 133)

III. INSTRUCTIONS

1) Please arrive at your scheduled Mass on time. If you can't be present, please arrange for a qualified substitute. Please dress modestly and reverently. Avoid clothing with slogans, words, or distracting images.

2) Check the lectionary on the ambo before Mass begins to ensure that you see where the readings are, how they are laid out on the page, and whether there is a note from the choir about the responsorial psalm or any other notes.

3) During Mass, when the congregation sits after the collect, approach the sanctuary.

4) Bow profoundly to the altar and enter the sanctuary, going to the ambo.

5) Proclaim the first reading:

The readings are introduced using the formula written in the lectionary, such as "A reading from the Book of Genesis."

Do not augment or change this introductory formula. For example, do not say, "The first reading is a reading from the Book of Genesis." (cf. Response of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Notitiae* 14 [1978]: 303, no. 5)

Do not change the text of the reading.

At the end of the reading, as written in the lectionary, say: "The Word of the Lord."

6) If appropriate, proclaim the responsorial psalm (or part of it, according to the choir's instructions):

Proclaim the antiphon, which the congregation then repeats. If there is more than one option, use the first option.

Proclaim each verse of the psalm, then pause, allowing the congregation to repeat the antiphon.

Do not introduce the responsorial psalm. For example, do not say, "The responsorial psalm is ..."

7) If there is a second reading, proclaim the second reading in the same way as the first.

8) When finished proclaiming the readings, exit the sanctuary.

9) As you step out of the sanctuary, pause and turn toward the altar. Bow profoundly to the altar, and then return to your pew.

10) If announcing the petitions, once the creed is finished or once the congregation stands for the petitions, enter the sanctuary and approach the ambo the same way as before. Following the priest's introduction, announce each petition, allowing the congregation to respond. After the priest's concluding prayer, exit the sanctuary and return to your pew as before.

IV. PROCLAIMING THE READINGS

“A speaking style on the part of the readers that is audible, clear, and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the word of God properly to the congregation. The readings, taken from the approved editions, may be sung in a way suited to different languages. This singing, however, must serve to bring out the sense of the words, not obscure them. On occasions when the readings are in Latin, the manner given in the *Ordo cantus Missae* is to be maintained.” (*General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 14)

Review the readings before Mass, ideally several days before. Occasionally there are several options or forms for readings. Unless otherwise instructed, use the longer form of a reading or the first option.

The lectionary prints the readings using *sense lines*, which greatly aids in their proclamation.

When reviewing the readings, pay special attention to:

any unfamiliar proper nouns

any words you do not know

the difference between rhetorical questions and true questions:

rhetorical question: “What can separate us from the love of Christ?”; “Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

true question: “Master, where are you staying?”

the overall sense of the passage

quotations

quotations within quotations

Consider the acoustics of the church:

adjust the microphone so that you can speak directly into it but without being too close

the acoustic effect varies greatly depending on number of people, etc.

speak distinctly and at a pace that adapts to the acoustics of the church

be careful with syllables that are easily lost, such as -nd, -nt, -ope, -ute and similar

be careful with difficult words: *peculiarly*

Pronunciation:

there are sometimes several accepted ways to pronounce proper names in the Bible

for example: *Darius*, *Nebuchadnezzar*

you can find audible examples of pronunciations online

be attentive to homonyms or near-homonyms:

bow: “I set my bow in the clouds”; “The bows of the mighty are broken”
versus “Come, let us bow down in worship”

prophecy (noun) versus *prophesy* (verb)

immortality versus *immorality*

“Come, let us return to the LORD,
it is he who has rent, but he will heal us;
he has struck us, but he will bind our wounds.”

learn the meaning and pronunciation of any words that are unfamiliar to you:

diadem

tumult

recompense

reproach

anoint