

# Liturgical Guidelines for the Ministry of Reader



*"When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church,  
God himself is speaking to his people,  
and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel."  
General Instruction of the Roman Missal 2002, no. 29*

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# Holy Family Catholic Church

## *Procedures for Readers*

### *The Ministry of Reader:*

We are called to Christian ministry by our Baptism. Jesus told his disciples: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out all the things I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-20). Saint Paul wrote of the different gifts we have received and our responsibility to use them: “There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

The Ministry of Reader is an excellent vehicle for using your gift of communication skill. If you are called to this ministry you should strive to develop and improve that skill for the honor and glory of God, so that you can help his people know and love him better through his holy Word.

This is an exalted calling. The Second Vatican Council decreed: “Christ is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in church.” As readers we speak for Jesus when we proclaim the Word of the Lord to our fellow parishioners at Mass. We are called upon to assist the assembled faith community to really hear and understand God’s Word. This requires a sincere proclamation of the scriptures, not simply reading to them. The reader is to give life to God’s Word!

### *General Principles:*

1. **Prepare.** Begin several days before your scheduled reading. Use your WORKBOOK FOR LECTORS and a BIBLE. Read the commentary in the WORKBOOK FOR LECTORS. Read the whole bible chapter that contains your reading, including the endnotes and commentaries that pertain to the particular chapter and book. Understanding the context and the literary type of the reading will help you with your proclamation. For all types of reading proclaim the Word from your heart with conviction, intensity and energy. Communicate that you believe what you are reading is important and that you *care* about what you are sharing.
2. **Practice.** Practice your reading aloud, whether this is with a video or tape recorder, to a family member or a friend, or simply to yourself in a mirror. This is the best way to “wrap your mouth around the word” for an effective presentation and to learn to overcome any stumbling points.
3. **Pray.** Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you proclaim God’s word effectively, for his honor and glory.
4. **Pace.** Proclaim your reading slowly, distinctly and with reverence. There is always a tendency to read too fast. Remember these are God’s words and in order for the assembly to grasp and understand them they must be heard. The people are totally dependent upon your proclamation.
5. **Responsibility.** As a minister to the assembly it is your responsibility to get your own replacement if you are scheduled and cannot meet your obligation. Review the schedule, call another reader scheduled for a different date, and swap Masses or get them to fill in for you. Keep calling until you get a replacement.

## Attire

Holy Family Parish does not have a specific dress code, but your appearance should reflect reverence and dignity toward the ministry you are performing. Extremely casual attire is inappropriate to the solemnity of the liturgy and the importance of your ministerial role.

## Techniques for Readers

- **The Difference Between Reading and Telling a Story** – You can pronounce all the words correctly, but “miss the boat” with your reading if you do not put your heart into it. It will sound like you are just reading and people will soon lose interest. However, when you tell a friend something you are really interested in, it does not sound like that. You use variable volume, pitch and pacing; you pause between phrases; your expression shows your interest. In other words, you are *telling*, not reading, the story. A reader who does this will capture and hold the people’s attention. They will know the reader is speaking from the heart and with conviction.
- **Phrasing and Pauses** – As you prepare your reading, decide where you will use pauses, both to separate phrases and to add emphasis. The LECTONARY FOR MASS has the reading laid out in sense-line format, which makes this a little easier for you.
- **Pacing** – Avoid too fast a pace. The assembly needs time to grasp the meaning of the words, but also vary the pace as you do when you speak; this adds interest. This should come naturally if you are involved in the reading and the telling of the story.
- **Inflection** – Vary your voice inflection to express the meaning of the story. This avoids the monotonous tone that tends to put the assembly to sleep. Rising pitch can indicate excitement, add emphasis, or express a question. A lower pitch should be used for the last word of a sentence, but be careful to maintain the volume at an audible level.
- **Volume and Microphone Techniques** – Varying the volume demonstrates your interest and involvement in the reading, but be sure your lowest volume is still audible throughout the church. Remember that the microphone cannot make you sound convincing, it only amplifies the volume. You need to project your voice as if you do not have a microphone. Find a good position for the “mike” that gives good amplification without the popping sounds that result if you are too close.
- **Articulation** – Do you speak clearly? Do you slur the words or run them together? Take your time and be sure each word can be understood. Be sure to pronounce final consonants clearly, but without exaggeration.
- **Word Stress** – You know how the meaning of a sentence can be changed depending on which words are stressed. To be sure you express the intended meaning, decide on the words you will emphasize and then use volume, pitch, or pauses to add emphasis.
- **Eye Contact** – With eye contact your listeners know that you are speaking to them and their expressions will tell you if they are receiving your message. Ideally, you should be able to look up before the pause at the end of each section that expresses a main thought and maintain eye contact during part of the pause while the people contemplate the meaning of the preceding words. The more you practice with the reading the easier it is to maintain eye contact. Remember you would maintain eye contact if you were telling a story to a friend!
- **Practice, Practice, Practice** – The more you prepare and practice the reading the easier it is to use all the above mentioned techniques. This is also why practicing the reading aloud is so important, even to yourself, because as you hear it you can decide how best to use pauses, inflections, and volume.

# Procedures for Reading at Mass

## Before Mass Begins

- Arrive 15 minutes prior to your scheduled Mass in the Ministry Room to review the readings and the Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful). Get help with any words or names you are not sure about. The LECTIONARY FOR MASS should be placed on the ambo opened to the first reading for the Mass of the day.
- Be sure the BOOK OF THE GOSPELS is in the back of church, ready to be carried in the entrance procession.

## The Introductory Rites

- If there is no deacon, a reader carries the BOOK OF THE GOSPELS in the entrance procession. At the sanctuary steps the reader makes a slight bow, then walks up to the altar and places the BOOK OF THE GOSPELS in the stand located on the altar. The reader then takes their seat.

## The Liturgy of the Word

- After the Opening Prayer has been prayed, and when everyone is seated, the first reader walks up to the ambo with a dignified, deliberate pace. There is no need to rush! The reader makes sure the reading is set, adjusts the microphone, makes eye contact, and then announces the reading, i.e., “*A reading from . . .*” There is no need to give chapter and verse. After a slight pause, the reader proclaims the reading with conviction. At the reading’s conclusion, the reader pauses, looks at the assembly and announces, “*The Word of the Lord.*” After the people’s response, the reader returns to their seat.
- After 15-20 seconds of silence the Responsorial Psalm is proclaimed.
- Following the Responsorial Psalm, the second reader waits 15-20 seconds before walking up to the ambo to proclaim the second reading. The second reader follows the same procedures as with the first reading, however, before they return to their seat they place the LECTIONARY FOR MASS on the ambo shelf.
- After 15-20 seconds of silence the Gospel Acclamation is begun and the priest celebrant or deacon will remove the BOOK OF THE GOSPELS from the altar and process with it to the ambo.
- Following the Creed, the second reader, if there is no deacon, walks up to the ambo to read the Intercessions (Prayers of the Faithful). The priest will cue you with an introduction. Remember, these are prayers so you should not rush them. Wait until the priest concludes them with the prayer before returning to your seat.

## The Concluding Rite

- Neither the BOOK OF THE GOSPELS nor the LECTIONARY FOR MASS is carried out of church. ***Why you might ask?*** The Word of God has been proclaimed to the assembly and has been accepted through their prayers for the world. Also, the Word of God has been enfleshed in the assembly when they received Holy Communion. Now they become the presence of Christ in the world by *their* words and actions throughout the week.
- The reader makes sure the LECTIONARY FOR MASS and the BOOK OF THE GOSPELS are returned to their appropriate locations at the end of the Mass.