

GUIDELINES FOR LECTORS

“The Word of God as proclaimed in the sacred Scripture lies at the heart of our Christian life and is integral to all our liturgical celebrations (Book of Blessings, 1827).”

“The two parts which in a sense go to make up the mass, the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 56).” Christ is truly “present in the word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are proclaimed in church (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 7).”

“Readings from Scripture and the chants between the readings form the main part of the liturgy of the word. The homily, profession of faith, and general intercessions or prayer of the faithful carry it forward and conclude it (Introduction to the Lectionary, 11)”

“The reader has his own proper function in the Eucharistic celebration and should exercise this even though ministers of higher rank may be present, (Introduction to the Lectionary 51).”

“[The readers] should be truly suited to perform this function and should receive careful preparation, so that the faithful by listening to the readings from the sacred texts may develop in their hearts a warm and living love for the Sacred Scripture (GIRM, 2000, 101).”

1. The pastor, or his delegate, determines the needs and the persons best qualified to serve the parish in the ministry of lector. Those who are invited into this role should realize that it is a ministerial function in the community, and should exercise it in a spirit of faith and service.
2. “All taking part in liturgical celebrations, whether ministers or members of the congregation, should do all that pertains to them, and no more, taking into account the rite and liturgical norms (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 28).” Therefore, those serving as lectors, especially at the Sunday Eucharist, generally should not serve in any other capacity at that particular celebration.
3. This ministry is open to women and men who have been fully initiated. They should be practicing Catholics, in good standing with the parish community and possess a love of the Scriptures.
4. Lectors exercise their ministry during the Mass, at Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of Priest, or during weekday communion services according to community needs.

5. The lector designated to proclaim the readings from Scripture, should have both the perspective and the ability to understand the Word, and must proclaim the sacred texts from a standpoint of faith. Therefore, preparation for this ministry should include both study of the scriptures and prayerful reflection on the passages to be proclaimed.
6. Good communication skills are necessary for anyone who proclaims the Word of God. Pauses, enunciation, phrasing, and the speed with which one proclaims should be well practiced. Silence after the readings is essential. Readers use the text as written; they do not add their own words.
7. Lectors do not ordinarily wear albs, but must be attired in such a way that shows respect for the dignity and solemnity of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
8. Ordinarily lectors should carry the book of the Gospels slightly elevated in the entrance procession at the Sunday celebration. Thus the assembly sees the Book of the Word and the respect with which it is held. When a deacon is present, he carries the book of the Gospels. The lectionary, however, is never carried in procession. (*GIRM 2000, 194, 120*)
9. If the lector is walking in the entrance procession, he or she makes a profound bow to the altar with the other ministers and walk to his or her place. If, however, the lector is carrying the Book of the Gospels, the profound bow is omitted and the lector goes immediately to the altar and places the book upon it (*GIRM 2000, 194*).
10. The psalm is usually sung, and is the role of the cantor. If there is no cantor, the psalm is read by the lector “in a way suited to fostering meditation on the word of God (*GIRM 2000, 61*).”
11. The Book of the Gospels is not carried out at the end of the liturgy.
12. A simple commissioning of lector may take place during the Eucharist. A blessing for lectors may be found in the Book of Blessings, chapter 62.
13. The length of service for each lector is left to the discretion of the pastor/pastoral administrator, as long as the minister remains a member of the parish.
14. At liturgies with children and those geared to families with children, children may fulfill the role of lector even if they have not been full initiated. (*See the Directory for Masses with Children, 22.*) The children must be trained in proclamation and communication skills, as well as reading skills. However, it must be clear to them that the Mass is not an opportunity for performance.