**Collaborative of Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Ann by the Sea**

**Guidelines for Readers**

**General Principles from the General Instructions of the Roman Missal**

Reading and Explaining the Word of God

When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel. Therefore, the readings from the Word of God are to be listened to reverently by everyone, for they are an element of the greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although the readings from Sacred Scripture the Word of God is addressed to all people of whatever era and is understandable to them, a fuller understanding and a greater efficaciousness of the word is nevertheless fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, by the Homily, as part of the liturgical action. (no. **29**)

Vocal Expression of the Different Texts

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favor meditation, and so any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided. In the course of it, brief periods of silence are also appropriate, accommodated to the assembled congregation; by means of these, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily. (no. **56**)

**Qualifications**

Participants in the Ministry of the Readers at Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Ann by the Sea should have the following qualifications:

* Is an initiated and practicing member of the Catholic Church, i.e., received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and frequently participates in the sacraments.
* Must be at least 16 years of age
* Regularly attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
* If the Reader is married, the marriage must be one recognized by the Church.
* Fully embraces the words and prayers that are offered in Mass.
* Gives positive witness to the Christian life.
* Possesses full knowledge of the Order of the Mass.
* Has the capability to proclaim Sacred Scripture at Mass.
* Is willing to prepare for the readings through prayer, study, and practice.

**Responsibilities**

Remote Preparation

Before reading at Mass, the Reader will want to ensure that he/she has a true familiarity with the scriptural texts that he/she is about to proclaim. This preparation will need to involve advance study of the scriptural texts to be proclaimed. Readers should be reviewing their readings in the Lector Workbook prior to Mass. It is suggested that even if you are not scheduled to read at a particular Mass, you should still review the readings in case you are called upon to serve. Preparation should include reading out loud. It is suggested that you practice reading at least 3 times out loud prior to Mass.

Mass Preparation

Arrive 10-15 minutes before Mass begins.

When you approach the ambo during Mass, all reverence is given to the altar not the tabernacle or the cross.

Check into the sacristy to let the presiding priest know you have arrived.

Once you have checked in with the priest, go to your seat. Readers should not remain in the sacristy.

Note: Readers will sit in the sanctuary at both Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Ann by the Sea.

Verify that the Lectionary is placed on the ambo and is open to the correct readings.

Ensure that the ambo microphone is turned on, adjusted to the Reader’s head position when reading.

Read the announcements 5 minutes before the start of the Mass.

Note: The Reader should not invite the congregation to stand. The cantor will invite them to stand.

Verify that a cantor is present to sing the Responsorial Psalm.

Note: The Responsorial Psalm is sung by the cantor. When there is no cantor at Mass, the Reader will proclaim it. The Reader should not say, “The Responsorial Psalm” just as they don’t say the first reading is a reading from…The Reader should read the response and gesture for the congregation to join in repeating the response.

When the Book of the Gospels is being used, please remove the lectionary from the Ambo after the 2nd reading.

* At St. Ann put it on the shelf
* At OLA place it on the Reader’s chair, small table if put out, or kneeler.

When the Deacon is present, the Prayers of the Faithful will be read by the Deacon. If the Reader is proclaiming the Prayers of the Faithful, he/she should come to the ambo during the Creed when “with the Holy Spirit…” is said.

Before leaving at the end of Mass reset the ribbons to the first reading.

**Dress Code**

Ministers should be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of service at the altar and their lay state. One’s general appearance, apparel and accessories worn during the liturgy should reflect the dignity of the role of one called to proclaim the Word of God. The respect you display in your appearance speaks volumes about the respect you have for proclaiming the Word of God.

Ladies: No shorts, sneakers, flip-flops, tight clothing or tank tops of any kind, capris are acceptable. Shoulders should be covered.

Gentlemen: No shorts, sneakers. Business casual attire is requested, nice, pressed slacks, collared shirt, if at all possible tucked in. No jeans or denim at any time.

Note: The Presider will ask that you step-down from serving at that Mass if you are not dressed appropriately out of respect to our Lord Jesus or the dignity of the Mass.

Note: Readers, even if not scheduled for that Mass, should always come to Mass properly attired and prepared to minister if needed.

**Effective Proclamation**

We have said that God’s Word is primarily spoken or proclaimed. What does this mean for those in the congregation? Our goal is to proclaim so clearly that no one must read from the missalette, just listen to the Word being proclaimed by the Reader. You are proclaiming the Word of God making God present to the people who have come to hear His Word.

When the Word is truly proclaimed and listened to, things happen. We experience the power and presence of the living God in this community, here and now. It is the discovery that the great works of God are not simply history but are enacted anew in our own community at Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Ann by the Sea as we gather to worship.

* Before you proclaim the Word, please ensure that you stand close to the microphone. Adjust microphone at the neck to be at mouth level when reading. Also, without straining your voice, please speak loudly so that everyone can hear His Word. You cannot speak too loudly but you can be too soft. Proclaiming should NOT be a dramatic reading. Believe what you have just read!

Look at the parishioners as you announce the reading. When readings are introduced, just say “A reading from the ….” Do not say the first reading is a reading from the…, same with the Psalm if reading the Psalm.

Pausing

The reverence associated with the act of proclaiming the Word can be enhanced through the appropriate use of pauses. There should be periods of silence after each reading to give parishioners an opportunity to digest what they have just heard. The Reader should pause for ***2 to 4 seconds*** at each of the following times during the readings:

* Upon arrival at the ambo
* After stating “A reading from The …[book of Genesis or first letter of Paul to the Corinthians]
* Before stating “…The Word of the Lord”
  + When saying the “Word of the Lord” say it like you mean it.
* After the congregation responds with “Thanks be to God…”
  + The pause at the end of the reading is especially important as this allows time for prayerful reflection on the reading.
* Before Beginning the Responsorial Psalm if being read by the Reader.

Posture

When proclaiming the Word, the correct posture is to have your hands flat on either side of the lectionary, if able. To keep your place, you can use your finger to follow along.

While proclaiming, no hand gestures should be used.

Note: If the Reader does read the Responsorial Psalm, he/she should raise their hand to have the congregation repeat the response.

Clarity

The reverence associated with the act of proclaiming the Word can be further enhanced in a manner that separates each word, saying each sound as clearly as possible, stretching the vowels slightly while keeping the natural rhythm and tempo, and placing the stress on key words.

Clear reading is more important than eye contact **except** when saying,

* “A reading from”
* the last line of the reading
* The Word of the Lord

Pace

Nearly all readers, even the most seasoned veterans, experience an increase in nervous energy when they are proclaiming the scripture in front of the congregation. The most common side-effect of this nervous energy is that the reader’s pace exceeds the ability of the congregation to hear and grasp what is being read. To address this common tendency, most readers must make a concerted effort to speak slower. Proclaiming the Word at one half the rate of conversational speaking is a good rule of thumb.

Read slower than you think you should. If you think you are reading too slow, go slower!

**Scheduling**

All scheduling is done through the Ministry Scheduler Pro program. Using your login ID and password you can input preferred Mass times and dates that you are unable to serve. Schedules are currently prepared every two months. Every effort is made to ensure that Readers serve during their preferred Mass time.

If you are unable to serve a Mass for which you have been scheduled, please initiate a swap request in the system. Other Readers will be notified of the request and can accept the swap request.

**Prayer of a Minister of the Word**

Lord, invest me with your power as I prepare to proclaim the marvel of your message. I have prepared my reading. I have tried to take within me the meaning of what I am about to proclaim. Help me to proclaim not just with my lips, but with my whole heart and soul. Lord, make me a hollow reed so that your voice will be heard by all who hear me. Free me of excessive concern over my performance. Convert my feeling of nervousness and turn all my apprehension into an energy for proclaiming your word with power and authority. May your Spirit live in me and fill the holy word that I proclaim. Amen.