

Lector Guide

St. Anne's Church, Shrewsbury

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to serve as a Lector at St. Anne's Church. We are honored to have you assist at Mass by serving the people of God through the proclamation of God's Word.

Recall the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, where it is written:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. (Jn. 1:1-5,14)

Jesus is present at every Mass through the readings of the Liturgy (Word of God) and in the Holy Eucharist (Body and Blood of Christ). It is in both forms of Jesus' presence that members in the assembly are fed and nourished at Mass. The Word of God is a Living Word, one that transcends time and breathes new life into each one of us.

Please be aware that many parishioners only read or listen to the Word of God when they attend Mass. Consequently, serving the Lord as a Lector comes with great responsibility to ensure that the Word of God is proclaimed in a manner that nourishes the soul. It is for this reason that the following guidelines have been established for Lectors.

Definitions

- **Ambo** – the pulpit where the readings of the Mass are proclaimed
- **Lectionary** – the book that contains the readings of the Mass
- **Prayers of the Faithful** (also called General Intercessions or Universal Prayer) – the petitions that we make after the Profession of Faith, placing our needs before the Lord

Qualifications

Serving the Church as a Lector is open to all members of the faith community who meet the following qualifications:

- Is at least in the sixth grade
- Lives a life according to Catholic Church teachings
- Is registered at St. Anne's Church
- Baptized Catholic, or fully initiated into the Catholic Church through RCIA

Preparation During the Week

Proper preparation is critical to proclaiming God's Word properly.

The Parish Secretary will mail you the readings ahead of your scheduled Mass. They can also be found online at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings> (select the proper date on the calendar).

It is important to study all the readings ahead of time during the week before you are scheduled as Lector. Practice them aloud several times to get comfortable with the text, flow, and pronunciation.

Although you won't be proclaiming the Gospel, you should also review the Gospel reading. Doing so will help you gain additional insight into the major themes or messages of the readings.

Each reading is different in style. It may be a letter, a poem, a set of instructions, or part of a word play. ***Pay particular attention to the punctuation.*** Just because a line ends on the page does *not* mean that you need to stop or pause. Follow the punctuation marks, not the layout of the text on the page.

As a Lector, you also have a unique opportunity to enhance your own prayer life. As you prepare yourself for the next time you are to read, look ahead at the readings and use them to create a personal prayer interlude for yourself. Take your own Bible (or look online) and examine the readings in it. Read the footnotes around the readings and gain some historical insight into the period in which the readings are based. Read some of the verses in the Bible before and after your reading to check out what else may be going on in the larger passage. This may influence how you proclaim the passage.

Before Mass Starts

Attire

Clothing is important. Use your best judgment in this regard. For Lectors in particular, good personal hygiene and tactful dress are signs of respect for the liturgy and for the people gathered in the assembly. You should refrain from wearing shorts, flip-flops, revealing clothing, inappropriate T-shirts, Hawaiian shirts, etc. If you are not sure whether something is appropriate for Mass, then it probably isn't. Err on the side of caution.

Arrival Before Mass

Try to arrive at least fifteen minutes before Mass begins. This will allow you ample time for any last-minute preparations as well as to prepare introductory notes and the pronunciation of names for the Mass intentions and other servers at Mass.

Reading Selections

If there are short and long versions of a reading, or multiple options for any of the readings, ask the priest or deacon which reading or version to proclaim. His homily may be based on a specific passage.

Make sure you get the correct pronunciation of all names contained in the readings. If in doubt, ask the priest or deacon before the Mass begins.

Lectionary

Check the Lectionary for proper placement of the bookmarks and/or ribbons. The ribbon should be placed at the first reading for the Mass being celebrated.

Last Minute Fill-In:

There are times when you may be called upon to be a substitute Lector at the last minute, just before Mass is to begin. If you are uncomfortable with this, don't do it. It is better to let someone else serve as Lector than to come across nervous or unprepared.

If you do agree to be a last minute fill-in, read through each of the readings at least once in order to look for any potential "hot spots."

It's always a good idea to prepare the readings before Mass whether or not you are scheduled to read. Doing so not only prepares you for the possibility of filling at the last minute, but it also helps you to understand the themes of the readings at Mass.

Welcoming Remarks

In addition to proclaiming the readings, you will be providing welcoming remarks to the congregation before Mass begins. A template containing the opening announcements is available in the sacristy for you to use.

As you prepare the names of the ministers serving at Mass (altar servers, Eucharistic Ministers, music ministers, clergy), make sure you check the correct pronunciation of their names as well. Note that there may be last-minute substitutes for any of the ministers who are scheduled to serve. If you don't recognize a face, it's okay to approach the person and politely ask for his/her name.

Prayers of the Faithful

Read through the Prayers of the Faithful carefully. They contain names of the deceased. The back page of the Prayers of the Faithful may also contain special announcements to be given after Communion is over. If you don't know how to pronounce any of the names, please ask. Do not wait until you are out at the ambo and reading the names to find out that you don't know how to pronounce them.

Introducing the Mass

A minute or two before Mass begins, the priest celebrant will invite you to go to the ambo and announce the opening comments. Bring the Lectionary, Welcoming Remarks, and Prayers of the Faithful with you to the ambo.

At the ambo, announce the welcoming remarks in a deliberate but not overbearing manner. (Don't forget the "Silence your cell phone" reminder.)

Place the Lectionary on the ambo and open it to the first reading. This will prevent any fumbling around looking for it when it is time to read.

Proceed to the entrance of the church with the rest of the ministers for the entrance procession.

Procession

The procession line at the beginning and end of Mass goes in the following order:

1. Altar Servers
2. Lector
3. Eucharistic Ministers
4. Clergy

When you reach the altar during the opening procession, bow reverently before going to your seat (the first chair immediately next to the ambo). Similarly, you will bow again before the altar for the closing procession.

During Mass

Seating Posture

Please be aware that many people in the assembly watch those who are sitting in the sanctuary and comment on any behaviors they may consider disrespectful or improper. For this reason, all ministers should demonstrate attentiveness to the Mass by sitting with good posture, feet flat on the floor, and avoid crossing their legs and arms.

First and Second Readings

As you get ready to step up to the ambo for the first reading, turn to face the altar and bow slightly. When you begin the reading, do not start with “The first reading is...” or “The second reading is...” The proper wording is simply “A reading from the book of...” as indicated in the Lectionary.

Similarly, at the close of the reading, do not say, “This is the Word of the Lord.” The proper wording is simply “The Word of the Lord” as indicated in the Lectionary.

After you complete the second reading, return to your seat and wait for the Gospel to begin.

Responsorial Psalm

The Lector may or may not read the Responsorial Psalm, depending on the musical arrangement for the Mass. In general, the Responsorial Psalm is handled as follows at each of the Masses:

- 4:00 Vigil The cantor usually sings a song appropriate to the Mass, in place of the Psalm. While the cantor sings, you may sit for the duration of the song and return to the ambo after the hymn concludes.
- 7:00 a.m. The Lector proclaims the Psalm. There is no music at this Mass.
- 9:00 a.m. The cantor usually sings the response, and the Lector proclaims each of the verses of the Psalm. Remain standing at the ambo.
- 10:30 a.m. The choir sings the response and verses. You may sit for the duration of the Psalm and return to the ambo after the singing concludes.

Note: During the summer season, the choir takes a rest and does not sing during the 10:30 Mass. This Mass will resemble the 9:00 Mass.

Holy Day Masses Check with the priest or deacon whether there is music at the Mass. If the cantor is present, check with him/her to determine what your role will be for the Psalm.

When you proclaim the entire Psalm, such as at the 7:00 a.m. Mass, it is not necessary to introduce the Psalm by saying, "The Responsorial Psalm is..." or "The Responsorial Refrain is..." You may launch immediately into the refrain. If necessary, use a slightly elevated hand gesture to indicate that the community should respond.

Prayers of the Faithful

The Prayers of the Faithful are the responsibility of the deacon to offer on behalf of the assembled community. If no deacon is present at Mass, the Lector offers the Prayers of the Faithful.

After assembly recites the Profession of Faith, the priest celebrant introduces the Prayers of the Faithful. Proceed to the ambo (if there is no deacon present) and begin with "The response to the prayers of the faithful is..." as noted on the prayer sheet. Recite each intercession, followed by a brief pause, and then "We pray to the Lord."

Reception of Communion

After the sign of peace, proceed to the side of the altar with the Ministers of the Eucharist and altar servers, awaiting reception of Holy Communion. The priest will give himself Communion first (Body and Blood), then the deacon, and finally to all other ministers.

You are invited to receive Holy Communion under both species: Body and Blood. If you choose not to receive from the chalice, simply return to your seat after you have received the Host.

As the priest or deacon approaches you with Communion, Body or Blood, make a slight, reverent bow before receiving.

After Communion

After Communion has been distributed to the members of the assembly, the deacon or priest will place the remaining Hosts in the Tabernacle, and the empty ciboria (Communion vessels) will be placed in the sacristy.

As noted earlier, there may be some special announcements. These announcements are written on the back page of the Prayers of the Faithful for delivery after Communion is complete.

After the Communion hymn completes and the vessels have been put away, proceed to the ambo to provide any final announcements.

End of Mass

At the end of Mass, leave in the same order that you arrived (behind the altar servers and before the Eucharistic Ministers). Bow at the altar before proceeding down the aisle.

When you return to the sacristy, retrieve the Lectionary and Prayers of the Faithful from the ambo and return them to the counter in the sacristy for the next Mass. Discard the welcoming remarks in the recycling bin.

Reading Tips

Proclaiming the Word of God properly is vital to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The method of reading really sets the stage for how the Mass is celebrated and how the assembly views the importance of the Liturgy. Here are a few tips that should be followed to enhance the spiritual experience of the faith community.

- A. **Take your time.** Please don't hurry the readings. The readings are the primary reason you are there and the most important thing you can do is to read them purposefully and deliberately. You may think you are going too slowly, but remember that your voice projects over a sound system inside a building that has a strong echo. Speaking slowly allows the assembly to process what they hear.
- B. **Silence is golden.** Deliberate use of pauses and silence allows the assembly to digest what they just heard. Pay particular attention to punctuation marks. For example, when reading a comma-separated series (which is common in many of St. Paul's letters), pause slightly at each comma. Before closing a reading, pause for two to three seconds before saying "The Word of the Lord."

Pause between readings for a count of ten seconds. The Glory Be prayer lasts about this long and is a good way to fill in the silence in your head as you pause before the next reading.

- C. **Use inflections.** As part of your preparation during the days leading up to Mass, try to include vocal inflections that suggest the affective aspect of the readings.

Your voice is a marvelous instrument, so play it like an instrument. Monotone simply does not work. Use emphasis and spirit to create and enhance the mood that the reading calls for. Don't be shy. (Do not dramatize, however.)

- D. **Keep your head up.** Do not speak down into the book, but lift up your chin so your voice can get to the microphone and project outward.
- E. **Make eye contact.** Remember that you are speaking to a church full of people. Try to look at them occasionally. Use your hands and fingers as needed to keep your

place in the readings as you look at the people. They need to know that you love what you're doing. Eye contact shows that the Word of God is directed to each person present in the assembly.

- F. **Enjoy the celebration.** As you read the opening remarks before the beginning of Mass, offer a welcoming smile. This helps to set a joyful mood. After all, Mass is a celebration; we should be joyful.

Conclusion

Please remember that reading at Mass is an act of public address. It is crucial that the Word of God be proclaimed in a style of speaking that communicates both effectively and affectively.

We praise God for this opportunity to share the Word with our fellow parishioners. Thank you for responding to God's call to join us in this ministry.