



The Ministry of Reader (Lector)

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish

1200 East 21st Street

Ashtabula, OH 44004

(440)998-4111

FAX - (440)998-7829

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The reader or proclaimer exercises a role of ministry in the liturgy. The Second Vatican Council's **Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy** states that: "Christ is present in his Word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church." (#7) Thus the reader's or proclaimer's role is not one of merely *reading*, but of *celebrating* the presence of Christ in the Word and making that Word come alive to those who hear it. Well-prepared readers or proclaimers help to elevate the consciousness of all people so they may integrate their lives and liturgy.

The reader or proclaimer has a dual role: to proclaim the Word of God and to listen to that Word. Readers or proclaimers prepare thoroughly at home throughout the week before they are scheduled to read. They pray with the Scriptures, hoping in faith that God will come to them through the printed words and that they will be able to convey God's presence to the assembly. They are people of the Word.

(Taken from the "Diocesan Liturgical Directory"
of the Diocese of Youngstown, 12/27/1995)



INTRODUCTION

During the celebration of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word engages the assembly in the proclamation of the living word of God. The static words on the pages of our Bibles become the living Word of God through our *effective* proclamation. In this way, our faith history comes to life! The Liturgy of the Word is not a time for learning a Scripture lesson. It is a time to experience the life-giving Word of God made present in the vibrant sound of the human voice.

A poor Reader can wreak havoc with the Word of God. **The most effective sign of a good Reader is one who proclaims the Good News with life, energy, intelligence and enthusiasm.** Dramatic skills will never replace these basic rules of proclamation. The Ministry of Reader does **NOT** require dramatic interpretation of the text. It does, however, require good oral interpretation. To be effective in proclaiming the living Word of God for the assembly, the Word of God must be alive in the daily life of the Reader.

The Ministry of Reader is just that, a ministry. The one who proclaims the Scriptures is not merely reading but, in truth, *proclaiming* the Scriptures. The Reader's role is to celebrate the real presence of Christ in the Word and to make that Word come alive to those who hear it.



SOME SUGGESTIONS

1. **NEVER READ PUBLICLY WHAT YOU HAVE NOT READ PRIVATELY.** Even the most experienced Readers can get tongue-tied by a passage that they have not seen recently. Difficulties with content, unexpected punctuation (or lack of it), or unfamiliar proper nouns are all reasons to prepare in advance. Be familiar with the Scriptures you are to proclaim. Read them and pray with them in advance, throughout the week if possible, using the workbooks provided to you from the parish.
2. **Know and understand what you are proclaiming.** In your preparations, discover where the “*center of gravity*” lies in each sentence of the Scripture passage. Let the stress of your voice fall on the nouns and active verbs that make up the “*meat*” of the passage. Often, what the author intended to affirm, deny, or call attention to is best discovered by exploring the context of the passage in the Bible.
3. **Speak loudly and clearly.** Proclaim the scriptures to the assembly as if there were no microphone. A good Reader does not try to make the microphone do the work that he or she should be doing. Know that a microphone picks up and amplifies only what you put into it. The best placement for the microphone is about six inches in front of your mouth.
4. **Don't be afraid to be enthusiastic!** It is best for you to become personally involved in what you are proclaiming. Proclaim the Word with the excitement you would if you were telling the story for the first time, or to people who have never before heard these stories. Let the assembly recognize the Word of the Lord living in you.
5. Grammatically, verbs are more important than adverbs, and nouns are more important than adjectives. Therefore, **let your emphasis fall on the verbs and nouns**, not their helpers. Similarly, prepositions, while they should always be heard, should not be stressed.
6. Effective Readers learn to speak from the diaphragm, not the neck. **Begin with a deep breath** – lungs full of air!

7. **Speak with the kind of energy that can be felt in the body.** If the body does not feel the demands of speaking, your listeners will sense this lack of energy and your proclamation automatically becomes less effective. [e.g.: like reading a grocery list]
8. **Do not “swallow” the last word of the sentence.** If you do, the listener, having heard every other word, can lose the entire sentence. If you must drop or swallow an occasional word, never let it be a verb. Very often, the verb in the sentence is the one word that makes sense of the whole sentence.
9. Do not proclaim the Scriptures in an overly dramatic fashion. If you can simply proclaim the reading intelligently, animatedly and when indicated, conversationally, the listeners can do the rest. Hand gestures are rarely called for.
10. **Read sharply and insightfully**, never sullenly or dully. The Word is, after all, “Good News.” Never cause a worshiper to groan inwardly as you approach the pulpit, “Oh no, bad news!” The messenger (that’s you) inevitably affects the message.
11. An important skill to acquire (if you do not already possess the habit) is to **maintain some eye contact with the assembly**. More importantly, always try to read without unplanned interruptions and to be clearly heard by all. For persons who possess the gifts of hearing and sight, your service is an auditory and visual experience. Therefore, of first importance, those listening must be able to hear you.
12. After having concluded the reading, pause for a few seconds. Then say, in a matter-of-fact tone, “The Word of the Lord.” Do not proclaim this one phrase as if it were an inspired utterance.



SPECIFICS

1. When you are scheduled to read, please be in the sacristy at least fifteen (15) minutes before Mass begins. This will give you time to check the “layout” of the readings in the Lectionary and to review the General Intercessions.
2. “Dress with a neatness and dignity appropriate for the sacred liturgy.” [e.g., no shorts or t-shirts.]
3. If there are two Lectors, both will process in at the beginning. The first Reader will carry the Book of the Gospels (unless the Deacon does this) and do the first reading. The second Reader will do the second reading and the petitions.
4. In the entrance procession, the Reader carrying the Book walks alone immediately in front of the priest. The other Lector walks in front of the Book. Allow five to ten feet between you and the ministers in front of you.
5. Carry only the Book of the Gospels and carry it with dignity. Wait for all the ministers to gather at the foot of the Altar. (*See the diagram, next page*). Pause as the others reverence the Altar. As the one carrying the Book, you do NOT bow when the others do. As the other ministers move to their places, you place the Book of Gospels on the Altar and then take your seat among the assembly.
6. After the Opening Prayer, as the assembly is seated, the first Reader approaches the sanctuary and goes to the Ambo.
7. Upon reaching the Ambo, the Reader opens the Lectionary (*if necessary*) and adjusts the microphone. (*The tip of the microphone should be 4-6 inches from your mouth.*) If the people are still settling into their pews, wait until there is quiet, then begin. Adjust the book to a comfortable level for you to read, then proclaim **with energy** the Word of God.
8. At the conclusion of the reading, pause for at least five seconds, then say “The Word of the Lord.” Remain at the Ambo for a few moments of quiet reflection (*at least five seconds*) following the reading, then return to your pew. It is not necessary for you to turn the page or move the microphone when you’re finished. The Cantor and/or the next Reader can do this themselves.

9. When the Responsorial Psalm is finished, the second Reader should wait a few moments (*again, about five seconds*) until the music has faded before moving. Then approach the Sanctuary in the same manner as the first Reader and proclaim the second reading. When finished, close the Lectionary and put the book on the shelf behind the Ambo.
10. Toward the end of the Creed (*We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church...*) the second Reader approaches the Ambo for the General Intercessions. After leading the petitions, remain at the Ambo. Never leave the sanctuary until the Presider has finished the concluding prayer. After the “Amen” to the concluding prayer, then return to your pew.
11. After Mass is over, bring the Lectionary and the Book of the Gospels to the Sacristy for the next Mass.

ORDER OF PROCESSION

(direction of procession)

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Server #1 w/Cross

Server #2

Server #3

All Eucharistic Ministers

Reader #2

Reader #1 w/Book

Presider (Deacon)

ORDER AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR

[ALTAR]

(center)

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S#1 S#2 EMs R#2 Presider Deacon R#1 Book EMs S#3

SELF-EVALUATION TOOL

RATE YOURSELF ON THESE STATEMENTS:

EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
1	2	3	4

_____ I take seriously my role as reader by preparing throughout the week with the Sunday Scriptures.

_____ I take time to read and reflect on the Lectionary passages for the day I am to read.

_____ I understand the connections between the readings.

_____ I jot down major themes of the readings for my own reflection.

_____ I look up the biblical context of the passages I m to read to find out what the authors are emphasizing.

_____ I pray with the Scriptures.

_____ I allow God's Word to form and inform my attitudes and actions.

_____ I proclaim God's Word believing that the Word is alive and can transform my own life and the life of the parish.

_____ I read unselfconsciously.

_____ I have presence – a spirit of prayerfulness and inner authority that gives credibility to the words I speak.

_____ I know how to use the microphone.

_____ I speak clearly and audibly.

_____ I get a substitute for myself whenever I cannot read when I am scheduled.

_____ I take advantage of ongoing education and formation courses at the parish and in the Diocese.