

LECTOR HANDBOOK

Materials Needed

Lector Workbook for the current cycle (year)

The Lectionary readings are divided into three cycles – A, B, C – one for each year and are repeated every 3 years. The Gospel readings in Cycle A are taken from the Gospel of Matthew; Cycle B from the Gospel of Mark; and Cycle C from the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is used every year during Advent, Lent, and Easter. The church's liturgical year begins on the first Sunday of Advent.

Preparation at home

1. Always read all three scripture readings from your current Lector Workbook. The first reading has been chosen according to its relationship with the gospel. You will be able to see what ideas or themes connect the gospel with the reading from the Old Testament. You can see when there are (and when there are not) connections with the second reading as well.
2. Using your Lector Workbook, please do the following:
 - Identify the type of passage you are to read. Is it a story? Is it a dialogue between different characters or voices? Is it a prophecy, a letter, a series of laws, a parable, a witty saying, or a song? The depth of your understanding will be visible to the congregation.
 - Ask yourself a few questions about the meaning of the passage, such as: What lies behind the writing of this passage? Where is its climax? What is the tone – comforting, scolding, warning, informative, or intimate?
 - Use your imagination to visualize action passages and narratives. See in your mind's eye what is taking place. Imagine how those involved are feeling, why they act the way they do.
 - Pick out the most important sentence or phrase. Try to communicate it above all else.
3. Check the pronunciation of unfamiliar names in the scriptures. If you happen to trip over one while proclaiming, move on; your job is to convey the meaning of the passage as a whole. A good pronunciation web-site to use is found at <http://netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm>. You will be able to hear the pronunciation of the word in question.
4. Practice reading aloud in front of a mirror or for family or friends. Notice how often you look up and make eye contact as you read. Remember to keep your place in the text.
5. Read slowly and enunciate crisply, pausing at every comma and stopping at every period. Don't drop your voice at the end of a sentence.
6. Articulate deliberately the consonants at the ends of words – the d's and t's, for example, as in God (rather than Gaw) and not (rather than naw). Sometimes the whole meaning rests on such words.
7. Vary your treatment of any text parishioners know well (Christmas texts are among the most familiar). That way your proclamation won't fall flat or become hackneyed.
8. Learn to stress a phrase or word in various ways: a hushed voice often works better than a raised voice.
9. Rehearse several times any Bible passages with run-on sentences (typically in Paul's letters) or any text where the meaning is apt to be lost to listeners. Your task is to communicate meaning.
10. Consider yourself a "proclaimer of the word of God." It is the skills of a proclaimer that you will be developing and using, not those of an actor, radio announcer, or toastmaster.
11. Consider nonverbal communication. Let your body language and facial expressions help you express the message of the reading. Posture, gesture, and facial expression should complement your words.
12. Observe and learn from other lectors when you are not scheduled to lector.
13. Ask several people to give you honest feedback on your lectoring skills. Use these constructive feedbacks to improve your skills.
14. Allow the Scriptures, more and more, to influence your daily life. This is the best part of being a lector; the Scriptures begin to form you...
15. Prepare the Prayers of the Faithful using the tips at the end of this handbook.

Before Mass

- 1) Arrive 15-20 minutes before Mass and sign-in in the Sacristy whiteboard or check off your name on the list of ministers to notify people that you are present. Introduce yourself to the priest if the priest is new or visiting.
- 2) Take a look at the Lectionary before Mass, noting your readings and how they look different from the workbook. Make sure the ribbon marker is on the correct page for the first reading and placed in the ambo. The Lectionary can be found:
 - a) St. Bartholomew – in the ambo.
 - b) St. John & Holy Cross – in the Sacristy on the counter.
 - c) St. Maximilian Kolbe – on the ledge near the Sacristy.
- 3) Turn on the sound system on. The switch can be found:
 - a) St. Bartholomew – behind the ambo around the corner – little red switch above the credence table.
 - b) St. John & Holy Cross – in the Sacristy on the wall by the door.
 - c) St. Maximilian Kolbe – behind the altar.
- 4) Check any pronunciations of words and names in the scriptures and Prayers of the Faithful (including the Book of Intentions at St. Bartholomew) that you are unsure of with the celebrating priest.
- 5) At St. Bartholomew, review the intentions in the Book of Intentions making sure you can read any handwritten additions to them. **MAKE SURE THAT THE INTENTION PAGE IS SET TO THE CURRENT SUNDAY – CHECK THE HEADING.** If it is not set to the right Sunday, please find the right place in the book. It should be the same as the heading in your Lector book for this Sunday – for example, 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time.
- 6) Make sure you know who the Mass is intended for and how to pronounce his or her name. The intentions for each Mass is listed in the Book of Intentions at St. Bartholomew and in the bulletin, which can be found on-line or e-mailed to you, if desired.
- 7) If anxious, take a few deep, slow breaths to calm yourself. Remember to pray and have humility. God will transubstantiate your speaking into the Word of God.
- 8) Check with the celebrating priest to be sure there are no changes to the standard procedure because of special liturgies (Communion, Anniversaries, special blessings, etc.) or additional participants (priests, servers, speakers, etc.) – for example, Christmas, Easter Vigil or Confirmation/Eucharist liturgies.
- 9) At St. Bartholomew, the usher will move the Book of Intentions to the ambo before the procession.
- 10) If there is no deacon ministering at this Mass, retrieve the Book of the Gospels, set the ribbon for the correct Gospel reading, and put on back table in preparation for the procession from the following places:
 - a) St. Bartholomew - from niche in wall by doorway to church
 - b) St. John & Holy Cross – from the Sacristy
 - c) St. Maximilian Kolbe – ledge near the Sacristy
- 11) At St. Maximilian Kolbe, the lector will give the welcome and announce any second collection and/or other announcements (this is done by the cantor at St. Bartholomew and St. John & Holy Cross). Do not leave the announcement sheet on the ambo, but take it to your seat with you.

While Reading

1. While processing to the altar, take your cue on walking speed from the celebrating priest not the altar servers. Walk 2-3 feet ahead of the celebrant, holding the book up high. Do NOT stop in front of the altar or bow, but go directly to the altar and put book of the Gospels down, closed in the center of the altar. Sit in your pew. If a deacon is present, then the deacon processes with the Book of the Gospels.
2. As Father sits after the Collect (opening prayer), walk up for the first reading.
3. Approach the ambo as reverently as you would approach the altar. Christ is present in God's Word and Eucharist, the "two tables" of the liturgy. You may make a slight bow to the altar when you approach the ambo.
4. Make sure that your face can be seen over the ambo. If not, use the step stool near the ambo.
5. Begin by adjusting the microphone, if necessary, to your height and to be about 6 inches from your mouth. If it makes a noise when you touch it, ignore it.

6. Look out at the congregation for a second, moving your head to scan the entire horizontal space as you introduce the reading. This is a time-tested way to attract the congregation's attention and focus it on the Scripture.
7. Start with "A reading from the..." (Do NOT say "The first reading is...") Finish with "The Word of the Lord" (Do NOT say "This is the Word of the Lord"), stand at the ambo for a moment of silence (recite the "Hail Mary" silently), then put the Lectionary open on the shelf in the ambo and sit on the chair behind the ambo for the Responsorial Psalm.
8. If there is no cantor at the Mass and you are reading the Responsorial Psalm, then pause and continue with reading the Responsorial Psalm. Start with the response and raise your hand each time you want the congregation to say the response with you. Do NOT say "The Responsorial Psalm is..." just start with the response.
9. Pause for a moment of silence after the Psalm before starting the second reading. Wait until the cantor sits before standing for the second reading.
10. Retrieve the Lectionary from the shelf in the ambo, read the second reading, close with "The Word of the Lord", stand at the ambo for a moment of silence, then close the Lectionary and put it on the shelf in the ambo. Return to your pew.
11. Prayer of the Faithful—after the Profession of Faith and short prayer, go up to the ambo and say "Our response today is..." or "Please respond with...", read 4-5 intercessions, pausing each time for the congregation to respond. Don't forget to add your own intercessions that you composed before Mass. Please see the tips at the end of this handbook for creating intercessions. Be sure to include the final intercession, the intention of the Mass (not who requested it). Stay standing while Father reads from the book of prayers. Then return to sit in your pew.
12. Receive communion with the congregation.
13. We do not recess with the book of Gospels.
14. Remember to project your voice so that the people in the last row of pews can clearly hear you. Microphones only amplify your voice. Use them effectively so that your voice is not inaudible or overwhelmingly loud.
15. Remember to pause between the end of the reading or intention and the closing words ("The Word of the Lord", "We pray to the Lord")
16. Speak slowly, clearly enunciating each word. Good proclamation requires more precise enunciation than ordinary conversation. Pause in appropriate places (refer to your workbook).
17. One rule of thumb: if you sound to yourself as if you are speaking too slowly, you are probably speaking at the right speed!
18. Remember to make eye contact with parishioners in all areas of the Church. Eye contact should be made while speaking, not just during pauses. It will take practice to be comfortable with making eye contact while speaking. You may discretely use your finger to follow the reading if you are afraid of losing your place while making eye contact.
19. Stand quietly and straight. Avoid shifting from one foot to the other or slouching.
20. Remember to modulate your voice – its pitch and volume. Use variations to make the text clear to the assembly.
21. Use your judgment about phrasing. There should be a musicality to your speech as you move more quickly over the least important phrases to linger over the most important ones.
22. Address yourself, when proclaiming, as much as you do the assembly gathered for worship. This is an attitude the congregation will understand and appreciate.

After Mass

1. Turn off the microphone switch.
2. Replace the Lectionary on the ambo with the first reading for the Sunday marked with the ribbon if there is a Mass after this one; otherwise, return the Lectionary to where you got it from earlier.
3. Replace the Book of the Gospels (and Book of Intentions at St. Bartholomew) to where you got them from earlier.

Tips for Composing Prayers of the Faithful

1. The Prayers of the Faithful have the following format and order:
 - for the needs of the Church
 - for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world
 - for those oppressed by any need
 - for the local community
2. In particular celebrations, such as confirmations, marriages, or funerals, the series of intercessions may refer more specifically to the occasion.
3. One of the intercessions can refer to the theme of the readings.
4. Watch the news or read the newspaper and please put in the Prayers of the Faithful something that is on the minds of most people – i.e. oil spill in the Gulf, soldiers in Iraq, fires in Colorado, etc.
5. There is no need to have more than 4 intercessions before reading from the Book of Intentions at St. Bartholomew.
6. Consider including an intercession such as, “For those prayers which we hold in the silence of our hearts.”
7. Use the resource that is e-mailed to you from the parish office for ideas. Please ignore, however, any responses that are not familiar to the congregation.

Some of the above tips and techniques were taken from:

Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers 1999, Lawrence E. Mick, LTP, 1998

Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers 1993, Aelred Rosser, LTP, 1992

Proclaiming the Word Do's and Don'ts for Parish Lectors, Karen Sue Smith, National Pastoral Life Center, New York, 1992