

Lector Handbook
Holy Spirit Parish/UK Newman Center
Lexington, Kentucky
Revised September 2015

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE MINISTRY

Your ministry as a lector should be a great blessing for both you and our worshipping assemblies. Prepare for your assignment by reading from the lector workbook. This workbook is available to reserve through the parish every year in late October. If you did not order a workbook, the readings for every day (without commentary) are available at the United States Bishops' website: usccb.org. Click on: "Readings of the Day" and choose the appropriate calendar date. In addition to preparing your own assigned reading, please prepare the other reading to proclaim if necessary, and also read the Gospel for context and understanding. In the workbook, be sure to read the comments as well. They are useful both for catechesis and public speaking advice. Pray over the texts and be sure that YOU understand, as much as is possible, their meaning.

Beginning a week before your assignment, read and pray over the texts to gain a thorough understanding. The success of your proclamation depends in large part on your understanding of the text. Your understanding/interpretation of the text may differ from someone else's but you must have some grasp on its message. After you have come to an understanding, PRACTICE READING THEM OUT LOUD so that you will be able to proclaim it clearly and without hesitation, finding a comfortable rhythm, including word emphases, pauses, phrasing, etc. PROCLAIM THEM OUT LOUD several days before your assignment and you will be well prepared to read it in front of the congregation. Reading the text to yourself is not a replacement for practicing the text out loud; they are completely different tasks—the former we usually do for our own understanding, but the

latter is for the understanding and instruction of others. Your proclamation must be clear and allow for the assembly to savor and be instructed by the spoken Word and Christ who is present through it. Please prepare both the first and second reading so that if the other reader were to have an emergency there is still a prepared reader. Note that it is entirely possible to choose to prepare the texts any and every week so that you could minister well as a replacement in the case that someone is unable at the last minute to fulfill their ministry.

ARRIVE 15 MINUTES BEFORE MASS. When you arrive, check your name off on the lector schedule inside the first closet door in Room 2 so the other lector(s) and hospitality minister know you are present. The scheduler also checks this to be sure people are indeed fulfilling their ministry. Identify yourself to the other lector(s) and the hospitality minister and confirm with the other lector(s) who has which duties. The second lector should identify him/herself to the presider so he knows who to send up for the Call to Worship. The first lector will carry in the book of the Gospels (unless there is a deacon). Therefore, while lectors may choose a seat in the assembly they must be with the presider at the doorway by 5 minutes before Mass, either to be sent to read the Call to Worship or to carry the Book of the Gospels.

If both/all of the lectors have not arrived by 10 minutes before Mass another trained lector should be asked to fill in for the missing minister. NOTE: If a substitute is necessary, that person should read the Call to Worship and the Prayer of the Faithful, since these typically require preparation immediately before liturgy by their nature. A prepared lector should proclaim the Word of God so that it may be effectively conveyed to the assembly. Only in the most unusual circumstances would an unprepared reader be used for the Sunday liturgy.

Review your assigned scripture reading in the Lectionary so that you are sure where to find it and can see the layout. Carefully review the assigned Call to Worship and Prayer of the Faithful in the lector binder-you may take the binder to another room to read them aloud but be sure to return it by five minutes before Mass. If there is something incorrect please edit them for yourself and those who

will follow you. Both the Lectionary and the lector binder should already be in place at the ambo when you arrive.

When you read, make eye contact with all sections of the assembly, including the choir. ALWAYS WAIT FOR THE ASSEMBLY TO BE QUIET AND ATTENTIVE BEFORE BEGINNING TO READ. This is significant especially for the Call to Worship, when you are claiming the people's attention for the first time-what you are to proclaim and draw attention to the beginning of our common prayer. It is equally significant for the first reading when people are changing positions and often latecomers are finding seats. Waiting may feel uncomfortable but what you are to proclaim is the Word of God. Both the beginning of our prayer and the Word of God are deserving of the full and undivided attention of the assembly.

READ SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY so that both the prayers and the Word of God may be understood and internalized on the part of the assembly, and so that you will have time to breathe and focus on what you are conveying. When you do this, you will be better able to control any nervousness, and the text will be more readily understood. The lector's goal is to become him/herself transparent, like a window that allows the light of the Word of God to pass through.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FIRST LECTOR

Fifteen minutes before Mass, be sure the Book of the Gospels is on the table in the gathering space just by the glass doors. Also, be sure the Lectionary is on the shelf of the ambo, with the marker at the first reading. Prepare the Prayer of the Faithful by reading it aloud in another room, making corrections if needed. Be careful to note that each petition should have an invitation to prayer at the end of it. Also note that the presider may add one or more petitions at the end, in cases of special need, and at the end of each of these THE LECTOR makes the invitation to prayer, as with the preceding petitions. Leave the open binder with the Call to Worship and Prayer of the Faithful on the top of the ambo. Five minutes before Mass please be in place for the procession, prepared to carry the

Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession. IF THERE IS A DEACON he will carry the Book of the Gospels and you may be seated in the assembly.

Carry the Book of the Gospels behind the candles, in front of the priest, holding it up for the assembly to see. When carrying the Book to the altar you do not bow. Approach the altar and from the side where the priest stands for the Eucharistic Prayer (between altar and ambo) and lay the Book flat on the strip of cloth which drapes the altar, front cover up. Since people are gathered all around the altar the orientation isn't of huge consequence, but it may help to realize that the priest/deacon will need to pick it up again for the procession before the Gospel.

After the Collect (opening prayer) the presider and assembly will be seated. Approach the ambo at this time. As you pass the altar a slight bow of reverence is appropriate-note that this bow is to the ALTAR as a primary symbol of Christ the Priest. That is, the bow is not to the book, ambo, crucifix, etc. The bow is always to the altar. Wait for silence and attention to begin the reading. Introduce the reading as instructed by the ritual language in the Lectionary.

At the end of the reading, pause a few seconds before saying "The Word of the Lord." Receive the assembly's response (Thanks be to God.) then take one step back and bow your head. Wait quietly as the assembly ponders the Word until the music starts for the Psalm, then return to your seat as the music begins. Again, a slight bow to the altar is appropriate as you proceed to your seat.

After the Homily the presider returns to his chair and begins the Creed. Do not wait until the end of the Creed to move to the ambo RATHER quietly move at the phrase "We believe in one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church..." Immediately at the end of the Creed step up to the ambo and retrieve the lector binder. The presider has only a brief introduction to the Prayer of the Faithful and you should be prepared to read the prayers as soon as he has completed the introduction.

The Prayer of the Faithful is the culmination of the Liturgy of the Word. It is here that we pray for grace, blessing, and conversion for each other and the world after reflecting, through scripture and inspired preaching, on what change

or action is required in light of God's teaching. After each petition PAUSE FIVE SECONDS before reading the invitation to prayer for the assembly. This gives an opportunity for reflection on the prayer before a response is given.

Remain in place at the ambo until the presider has prayed the concluding prayer for the Prayer of the Faithful. Move to your seat as the assembly is being seated.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECOND LECTOR

Fifteen minutes before Mass confirm that you can find your reading in the Lectionary. The Call to Worship will be in the lector binder. Read it carefully before Mass, edit if needed and practice it out loud. If this material is missing the presider also has a copy in his binder. You do not want to find out when you step up that there is no script. Confirm the name of the presider, the deacon if applicable, and the name of the other lector(s) since you will announce these names in addition to your own in the Call to Worship. Leave the open binder with the Call to Worship and Prayer of the Faithful on the top of the ambo. Five minutes before Mass be near the presider in the back of the worship space so that at Mass time he can send you forward for the Call to Worship. Double check which aisle the procession will use and approach the ambo using the same aisle as Mass begins.

When the presider sends you, you begin the liturgy by walking reverently down the aisle, bowing before the altar, and greeting the congregation from the ambo with a smile. Claim their attention before you continue with the Call to Worship. Only if you are physically unable to make this approach should you do something else, such as come from a seating area. This is the official beginning of our common prayer and should appear as such.

PAUSE after greeting the assembly (Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to Holy Spirit Parish, the Newman Center.) This gives the assembly an opportunity to respond in kind and to gather themselves to listen. Do not continue until you have their attention, even if you must wait. At the end of the

Call to Worship you will invite the assembly to greet those around them. At this point place the lector binder on the ambo shelf, move the Lectionary to the top of the ambo, and open it to the first reading. Greet those near you as you go to your seat.

The second reading is proclaimed after the psalm. When the music ends for the psalm, stand at your place and proceed to the ambo. Some of the shorter cantors move the lectionary to a shelf during the psalm so their music is not too high, so be prepared that you may need to move the Lectionary back up, though cantors do usually remember to re-place the Lectionary when they are finished. As you pass the altar a slight bow of reverence is appropriate-note that this bow is to the ALTAR as a primary symbol of Christ the Priest. That is, the bow is not to the book, ambo, crucifix, etc. The bow is always to the altar.

At the end of the reading, pause a few seconds before saying “The Word of the Lord.” Receive the assembly’s response (Thanks be to God.) then take one step back and bow your head. Wait quietly as the assembly ponders the Word until the music starts for the Gospel Acclamation. AT THIS POINT, NOT BEFORE, move the lectionary to the ambo shelf so the top is clear for the Book of the Gospels to be placed. Return to your seat. Again, a slight bow to the altar is appropriate as you proceed to your seat.

After Mass, return the Book of the Gospels to the table in the gathering space (not as part of the recessional but rather after the closing song) and be sure the ribbon in the Lectionary is returned to the first reading.

OTHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Speak as if there is no microphone/amplification. Because of our setting in the round and speaker placement there is a limit to how high we can turn the microphones without getting feedback. We must have a good amount of sound from the lector to work with initially. So please, read as if you had to reach the assembly with only your natural voice.

Do not lift the Lectionary or lector binder while reading from them. This will block the microphone and you will not be sufficiently amplified.

Do not lift the Lectionary when you proclaim at the end of the reading: "The Word of the Lord." This implies that the words on the page are the Word of the Lord. While that is true, in the ritual sense the Word of the Lord is present in the proclamation of the Word and in its shared hearing by the assembly. To lift the book reduces the ritual meaning of "The Word of the Lord" making it appear as if the lector is referring only to the words on the page. (Note that this text is not preceded by the words 'this is' which was in the older Missal, but rather parallels directly the invitation to Communion: The Body/Blood of Christ.)

Note that silence is broken not only by sound but also by movement. It may seem like a long time before the music begins after the first/second reading, or it may seem more efficient to move the Lectionary to make room for the Book of the Gospels as soon as you finish reading, but please wait patiently for the music to begin before moving. The assembly is not thinking about you as you stand still but about the Word of God you have just read. When you are moving you disrupt the silence and opportunity for contemplation, for the assembly and for yourself. Use the time for your own reflection on the Word you have just proclaimed.

Please do not leave until Mass is finished. As a minister you are there to be fully present to the liturgy and to those assembled for it.

The lector schedule is available in many forms. When the schedule is made it is posted to the parish website. It is also printed and available in hard copy outside the music room door (on the bulletin board). Each week the bulletin prints the list of minister assignments for the upcoming Sunday. Also, each week the parish office calls those who are assigned to remind them. There should be no surprises regarding who is scheduled.

If you will not be able to read when you are scheduled, it is YOUR responsibility to arrange for a substitute. When you accept this ministry you also accept the responsibility to be sure your assigned time is covered. There is no

one else to take care of this. You will receive contact information for your fellow readers and will be placed on the lector listserve. Please use these resources in a timely manner. In the unlikely event that no one is available to substitute, please contact the person scheduled with you so that they know you will not be there. In cases of emergency, you may contact Mary Weber Bane as well but it is not part of her duties to find replacements. When you accept the role of substitute please respond to the whole list so everyone knows the vacancy has been filled.

In regard to the listserve, it has been established solely to make communication easier for lectors trying to replace themselves for a liturgy and for parish staff to be able to distribute needed ministry information. It is a closed list so you may only send to the list from the exact address you give us when we put you on the list. UK particularly has many linked addresses but you will not be able to send from a linked address, ONLY the one (or ones if you choose to provide more than one address) we have registered. Please do not use the list to forward any material not pertinent to your ministry as a Newman Center lector.

When you arrive at Mass, even if you are not scheduled to read, it may be helpful to check in to see if your help is needed. There should not be a need for someone to step in, but last minutes emergencies do occur.

It is important that you participate in only one ministry at each Mass. On the days when you read, please do not serve as a Eucharistic Minister, Hospitality Minister, Server, Liturgical musician, or in any other ministry, including those recruited just before Mass such as candle or gift bearer. Your ministry as lector deserves your full attention. ALSO we as a parish do not want to create the impression that a few members have everything taken care of and that others do not need to step forward. This detracts from the responsibility of the entire celebrating community to minister to each other. Our goal is 'every member a minister' and sometimes people need to be allowed to see a need to step forward.

IN SUMMATION

The ministry of lector is one of great reward and growth. The opportunity to reflect on and share scripture is life-changing, especially if studying the scripture becomes a regular habit of prayer that extends even to times when you are not scheduled to serve as a lector. May you find that this closer relationship with the Word of God enriches your life, deepens your faith, and makes you ever more clearly a reflection of the face of Christ.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, and reap the many rich rewards of contemplating the Word of God!