

GUIDELINES FOR LECTORS
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

GENERAL INFORMATION

The *Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass* (1998) and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2011) provide the Church's liturgical theological foundations for the announcement of the Word of God in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy and, at the same time, provide the directives for those assigned the role of proclaiming the Word of God. These guidelines are garnered from these two documents for a consistent practice for *deputed* lectors in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. While these guidelines specifically address the role of the lector in the celebration of Mass, they are equally applicable to the proclamation of the Word of God in all celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word.

INSTITUTED LECTORS are men, who have demonstrated a particular relationship with the Word of God and with a formal liturgical rite to institute them as lectors, are charged by the Bishop to proclaim the Word of God, except for the Gospel, in the liturgical assembly, assist with the formation of others deputed to do the same, direct the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, and teach the Word of God in preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments (*Ministeria quaedam*, 1972). Instituted lectors, typically, carry out their role at Mass when the Bishop celebrates and alongside deputed lectors.

DEPUTED LECTORS are men and women selected by the pastor or chaplain to read for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy because they are of sufficient age and competency to carry out this liturgical role in the service of the Word of God and those who will hear it. An assessment of competency requires that the lector is typically a fully-initiated member of the Catholic Church without sacramental impediment, lives a Christian life in accord with the Word of God, and possesses the human maturity expected of those called to serve in the Christian community.

A basic knowledge of the *Bible*, *Lectionary for Mass*, and the Liturgy of the Word, as well as, the necessary oral proclamation skills are additional essential requirements. A basic knowledge of Sacred Scripture includes: the plan of salvation, the organization of the books of the *Bible*, as well as, the variety of genres and literary forms of its books. Some of the oral proclamation skills include: eye contact, enunciation, diction, inflection, pacing, projection and pronunciation.

The pastor or chaplain may choose to bless new lectors, after training and formation, with the rite found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 61, Order for the Blessing of Readers.

REMOTE TRAINING AND ON-GOING FORMATION for the liturgical role of proclaiming the Word of God includes spiritual, biblical, liturgical and technical dimensions. Programs to satisfy the expectations of this training and formation should be arranged periodically in parishes/institutions or groups of parishes. The Office for Divine Worship, in addition to its own programs, can assist pastors/chaplains with this training and formation.

ATTIRE

The lector dresses in a manner that expresses the dignity associated with the role of proclaiming the Word of God. Recreational and athletic clothing are considered inappropriate.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR MASS

The lector assumes the responsibility to prepare for the proclamation of the Word of God in advance of the liturgical celebration. This preparation includes a correct knowledge of the biblical reading to be proclaimed, a review and oral

practice of this reading beforehand, clarification on the pronunciation of unfamiliar words, and praying with the Word of God. This preparation also includes arrival for Mass in due time, a review of the *Lectionary for Mass* and its placement at the ambo beforehand, and insuring a familiarity with the sound system, if necessary. The lector, as a baptized member of the liturgical assembly, is expected to participate fully in the Mass both for the benefit of himself or herself and also as an example to others.

NUMBER OF LECTORS

Each of the readings of the Liturgy of the Word should have its own lector; this includes a psalmist for the Responsorial Psalm. A single reading, except in the expressed case of the singing or reading of the Passion of the Lord, is not to be divided among another or more lectors.

SEATING

The proper place for deputed lectors to sit is within the assembly. There is no need to assign or reserve certain seats for the lector (s); however, seating should be near to the sanctuary.

SILENCE

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in a manner that promotes meditation; therefore, any haste that impedes recollection is to be clearly avoided. Therefore, a reflective silence, observed by all, to take in the Word of God occurs before the Liturgy of the Word, after each reading and the homily.

LANGUAGE

The *Lectionary for Mass*, as a liturgical book, belongs to the whole Church and not to the lector alone for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. More importantly, the English translation of the Sacred Scripture used for Mass (Revised New American Bible) definitively translates the revealed Word of God for its announcement during Mass and should not be compromised with personal adjustments or distortions on the part of the lector.

THE *LECTIONARY FOR MASS*, THE *BOOK OF THE GOSPELS* AND THE AMBO

Only the approved liturgical books for the reading of the Word of God are to be used for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. These books in themselves are signs of God's Word and should be permanent, dignified and well-bound, and are not to be replaced by other pastoral aids. The ambo is likewise a sign of the dignity accorded the Word of God and is the proper place for the lector to proclaim the Sacred Scripture, including the Prayer of the Faithful when necessary.

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES

In the absence of a deacon and at sung Masses, the lector may process with the *Book of the Gospels*, slightly elevated, and immediately in front of the priest celebrant. If there is no deacon but a concelebrant, the concelebrant may process with the *Book of the Gospels*. The use of the *Book of the Gospels* is not required at every Sunday Mass or Solemnity.

When the *Book of the Gospels* is borne in procession there are no other gesture made by the lector such as a bow or a genuflection. The lector goes immediately to the altar, without a bow, and places the *Book of the Gospels* flat on the altar, leaving sufficient room for the priest celebrant to venerate the altar. After the *Book of the Gospels* has been placed flat on the altar, the lector bows profoundly to the altar and then takes a place in the nave.

The *Lectionary for Mass* is not carried in procession. Rather, it is prepared ahead of time for the First Reading and placed at the ambo before Mass begins.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

After the *Amen* to the Collect, the lector (or lectors and psalmist) process into the sanctuary, bow to the altar profoundly, and move to the ambo.

The First Reading

When the lector arrives at the ambo, he or she settles and then, making eye contact with those in the nave, announces the reading making use only of the introduction text in the *Lectionary for Mass*. After a brief pause, the reader proclaims the Word of God with a tone of voice and in a manner that corresponds to the genre and literary form of the Sacred Scripture. At the conclusion of the reading, the lector pauses and then sings or says, *The word of the Lord*. The lector, still looking toward those in the nave, receives the acclamation, *Thanks be to God*. Then, the lector returns to his or her place, first bowing profoundly to the altar. A brief period of silence is observed by all after the First Reading.

If the **Responsorial Psalm** is not sung, then it is proclaimed by the lector at the ambo.

The Second Reading is proclaimed as the First Reading. After the second reading, if the *Book of the Gospels* will be used, the lector removes the *Lectionary for Mass* and places it on the shelf in the ambo or another suitable location. It is never placed on the floor. Also, the *Book of the Gospels* should not be placed on the *Lectionary for Mass* if it was not previously removed. A brief period of silence is observed by all after the Second Reading.

The Acclamation before the Gospel is typically sung; however, when it is not sung, it may be recited by the lector at the ambo.

The Prayer of the Faithful

In the absence of a deacon, the lector announces the petitions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The lector is in place at the ambo for the priest celebrant's introduction to the Prayer of the Faithful and remains at the ambo for the concluding prayer. Only after the *Amen* does the lector return to the nave.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST and the Reception of Holy Communion

The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of Eucharist, although two distinct parts of the celebration of Mass, form a single act of worship. The lector's participation in the Liturgy of the Word as a minister of the Word, fortified by interior participation in the announcement of salvation in the Sacred Scripture in all parts of the Liturgy of the Word, prepares for a deeper engagement of the saving work of the Lord in the Eucharist, especially in the Eucharistic Prayer. The reception of Holy Communion on the part of the lector completes in a sacramental way ministerial and personal participation in the whole of the Mass. The reception of Holy Communion recalls for the lector his or her baptismal duty to participate in the Eucharist and carry out a liturgical ministry, as well as, consuming the living Word makes possible the living out in the Christian life this same Word of the Lord. It is for this reason that lectors at Mass are to be Roman Catholics able to receive Holy Communion.

THE CONCLUDING RITE

Neither the *Book of the Gospels* nor the *Lectionary for Mass* is carried out of the church. Likewise, the lector(s) do not recess at the conclusion of the celebration of Mass. The lector should take time to reflect on the Word of God proclaimed at Mass at a convenient time following the celebration.

THE ENTRANCE AND COMMUNION CHANTS

If the entrance and communion chants are not sung, the lector reads them or leads the congregation in reading them together. The entrance chant is read as the priest enters the sanctuary. The communion chant is read as the priest receives Holy Communion. The lector may read the chants at the ambo or another suitable location.

OTHER INFORMATION

USE OF THE *LECTIONARY FOR MASSES WITH CHILDREN*

In the celebration of Masses with mostly children present and with the use of the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, the Introduction to the liturgical book provides guidelines for the selection of children as lectors.

“All liturgical ministries are exercised for the prayer of the assembly. Therefore ministers should be selected on the basis of liturgical competence. It should not be presumed that children should proclaim the word of God in the celebrations in which this Lectionary [*Lectionary for Masses with Children*] is used. Some younger children are able to read the Scriptures competently, but the witness of older children, teenagers, or adults, ministering graciously and reverently to young children engaged in liturgical prayer, is more conducive to the children’s growing reverence for the Word of God, than the peer ministry of embarrassed or ill-prepared children (Introduction to the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, 28).”

Children, even if they are not fully-initiated members of the Church, are not excluded from the role of lector. They are to be considered for this role in Masses with children only if they are prepared to competently announce the Word of God and serve those who will hear it.

THE CHILDREN’S LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the celebration of the Children’s Liturgy of the Word, as foreseen in the *Directory for Masses with Children*, those asked to proclaim the Word of God are to be considered as lectors with the same ministerial expectations and qualifications as those who carry out this role in the celebration of Mass.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS AND FUNERALS

It is always preferred that in the celebration of the sacraments and funerals that those deputed to proclaim the Word of God are men and women who typically carry out this liturgical ministry with the necessary formation and ministerial competence. The proclamation of the Word of God in every liturgical celebration is first and foremost the announcement of the salvation and its proper minister serves this mystery and those who will hear it. Sentimentalism, lack of preparation, and separation from the sacramental life of the Church disqualify someone from assuming the role of lector.