

LECTORS GUIDELINES

Preparing the Readings

We begin by thinking ourselves into the minds and hearts of the prophets and other sacred authors. Think, for example, of the prophet Hosea, who never stopped loving, forgiving and taking back his unfaithful wife, until he came to realize that God loves and treat us, his far-from-perfect people. Think of St. John, whose writings constantly express the theme that “God is love,” and whose awareness of this fact was born of and nourished by his personal friendship with Jesus. When we come to prepare an assigned reading we must put ourselves into these writers’ minds and proclaim their words as if it were our message from God. Consider the readings in the context of the liturgical year. What season are we in? Do the readings express the joyful expectation of Advent, a loving God’s call to repentance in Lent, the solemn rejoicing of Easter? Then consider the reading in the context of the *Mass of the day*. Each Sunday and holy day the readings of the Mass share a particular focus. For example, are the readings focusing on the Good Shepherd, on Christ the Light of the World, on the universal call to salvation? The Old Testament readings in the first reading of the Sunday or holy day Mass have been selected and arranged according to the degree in which they shed light on the gospel. It is the gospel that determines the focus of the readings.

The First Reading

The lector reverently approaches the ambo. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross.

Upon reaching the ambo, ***wait for a period of silence*** and announce, “***A reading from ...***, not say, ***The first reading is a reading from ...***. ***Pause slightly*** before beginning the reading. As you proclaim God’s word maintain eye contact with the assembly. Do not keep your head buried in the Lectionary. Look up occasionally to your left, to your right, at the people in the front pews, and the people at the back. Remember that it is a matter of eye contact and not letting your head bob restlessly up and down.

Readings are broken up into phrases on a page in sense lines. If you have thoroughly familiarized yourself with the passage and taken it into your mind or heart, you could look up and make eye contact while proclaiming at the end of a sense line with the last 2 or 3 words in your memory. Point your fingers on the line where you are reading. This will ensure where you are when you make eye contact and resume where you are reading.

Be sure you know the correct pronunciation of all the words in your readings. Enunciate clearly and project your voice all the way to the back of the church.

After the reading, ***pause slightly*** and says, “The Word of the Lord”.

When the assembly has said, “Thanks be to God”, ***make a head bow inviting the assembly to reflect (pray Hail Mary inaudibly ...)*** before you leave the ambo or before you begin the responsorial psalm (if you are leading it). This not only allows more time for the assembly to absorb God’s word – it also confirms that their response is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and not a mere afterthought.

The Liturgy of the Word is celebrated in a way that favours meditation. Any kind of haste is to be totally avoided, for it impedes recollection. Dialogue between God and his people, with the help of the Holy Spirit, requires short periods of silence, adjusted to the assembly, during which the heart opens to the word of God and a prayerful response takes shape.

Leave the ambo, whenever either a cantor is present or you are not leading the responsorial psalm. Avoid unnecessary hand movements preparing the pages of the Lectionary for the next reader. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross in unison with the cantor (if present).

The Responsorial Psalm

The responsorial psalm ought always to be sung at the ambo. Sometimes, such as in the unavoidable absence of a cantor it then falls to the first reading lector to lead the praying of the psalm. This ensures that each reader has his or her own “message” to proclaim and avoids the lector’s task becoming purely functional than a true ministry.

If there are no accompaniment music playing and no cantor moving to the ambo, the first reading lector reverently move to the ambo to lead the praying of the psalm. It is recited in a manner conducive to meditation of the Word of God. The responsorial psalm is a prayer. The psalms differ in their mode of prayer. There are psalms of praise, psalms of thanksgiving, penitential psalms, psalms of distress, and wisdom psalms. The lector leads the assembly in praying the responsorial psalm to reflect the attitude of the psalmist accordingly. Say the response very clearly the first time it is announced. This will ensure that the assembly understand it the first time it is said and help them to remember it better. The assembly are trying to remember the response while at the same time paying attention to the verses of the psalm. This will ensure that the assembly understand it the first time it is said and help them to remember it better. The assembly need a clear indication of when the verse has ended so that they should come in with the response. The responsorial psalm is a prayer rather than a reading. Therefore you need not observe the same rules of eye contact with the assembly that you do when you are proclaiming the word: you are, rather, leading them in prayer. The responses can be signalled by looking up while leading the psalm at the end of the verse. Alternatively, an appropriate gesture may be used to signal the entry of the response. You may find that different methods are appropriate depending on such factors as the length of the response itself or the assembly does not have possession of a missalette or personal missal. If you see that the people are floundering, you can say the response along with them. Finally, **do not leave the ambo until the assembly has completed the final repetition of the response**. The people's response to the psalm, like their response to the word of the Lord, is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word. Leave the ambo. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross in unison with the 2nd Reading Lector (if present).

The Second Reading

After the responsorial psalm when the cantor or the first reading lector has left the ambo, the second reading lector reverently approaches the Ambo. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross in unison with the cantor.

Announce, "**A reading from ...**, not say, **The second reading is a reading from ...**". **Pause slightly** before beginning the reading.

As you proclaim God's word maintain eye contact with the assembly. Do not keep your head buried in the Lectionary. Look up occasionally to your left, to your right, at the people in the front pews, and the people at the back. Remember that it is a matter of eye contact and not letting your head bob restlessly up and down.

Readings are broken up into phrases on a page in sense lines. If you have thoroughly familiarized yourself with the passage you are proclaiming and taken it into your mind or heart, you could look up and make eye contact while proclaiming at the end of a sense line with the last 1 or 2 words in your memory.

Be sure you know the correct pronunciation of all the words in your readings. Enunciate clearly and project your voice all the way to the back of the church.

After the reading, **pause slightly** and says, "The Word of the Lord".

When the assembly has said, "Thanks be to God", **make a head bow inviting the assembly to reflect (pray Hail Mary inaudibly ...)**. This not only allows more time for the assembly to absorb God's word – it also confirms that their response is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and not a mere afterthought. The Liturgy of the Word is celebrated in a way that favour meditation. Any kind of haste is to be totally avoided, for it impedes recollection. Dialogue between God and his people, with the help of the Holy Spirit, requires short periods of silence, adjusted to the assembly, during which the heart opens to the Word of God and a prayerful response takes shape.

After the brief reflection, remove the Lectionary so there is room for the Book of Gospels. Place the Lectionary on the credence table or in some other suitable place, not displaying the Lectionary to the assembly.

Leave the ambo. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross.

Prayer of the Faithful

During the homily's reverent silence, the second reading lector or another assigned lector reverently approaches to the place in the sanctuary. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross.

Upon reaching to the place in the sanctuary and see the priest reflecting, make a head bow observing reverent silence. ***After the homily's reverent silence or Profession of Faith (if there is one) reverently move to the ambo. Wait after hearing the priest's brief remark inviting the assembly to pray before proceeding with the general intercessions.***

As you announce the general intercessions take special care with them. Perhaps they include requests to pray for particular people, such as the sick and the deceased of the community. Let your tone show that you really care about these people. Make sure that you know how to pronounce their names correctly. If you are announcing something like a fundraising event for the community, it could well be the enthusiasm you convey that makes the difference as to the success of these functions.

After the general intercessions ***stay on the sanctuary and make a head bow while the priest concludes with a prayer. Wait after the assembly has said "Amen"***. Leave the sanctuary. In a Mass make a profound bow to the altar otherwise make a head bow to the cross.