

## **GUIDELINES FOR OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH LECTORS**

### **HOW TO PREPARE?**

**Familiarity breeds devotion.** Lectors need to be familiar with *all* the readings of the Mass on the Sunday that they have been assigned to read at. This will give the lector a more complete sense of the religious themes and sacred ideas that the Church seeks to communicate to the faithful on a particular Sunday. *Remember that the first reading and the Gospel are always linked in some way in order to emphasise a theme.*

It is worth lectors investing in a CTS Sunday Missal or the Universalis App in order to have easy access to the Sunday readings.

**Practice.** Lectors need to practice their reading(s) out loud throughout the week before their assigned Mass. They need to be clear what they are communicating to the congregation and to do so with confidence. If a lector is not clear about what they are communicating, the congregation is unlikely to be either.

Practicing all the readings aloud will reduce nervousness and boost confidence. When the time comes for proclaiming these readings before the assembly, the lector will have already heard themselves speaking these very words and be familiar with them.

**Dress:** As a liturgical minister, the ministry of lector draws us more deeply into the mystery of God's love, which we experience in hearing the words of scripture. Proclaiming with respect and dignity is essential for everyone. In this light, when a lector is scheduled to serve at Mass, they should use good judgment in their selection of attire.

If a lector is dressed in a way that draws attention to themselves, then it is probably drawing people's attention away from the Lord's message which they have been commissioned to deliver. The

respect a lector displays in their appearance indicates to others the respect they have for proclaiming the Word of God.

## **WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF LECTORS BEFORE MASS?**

If a lector is unwell or there is some other reason that he/she cannot read, they should use the contact list that comes with the Rota (which is available on the website) in order to find a replacement. This is the responsibility of the lector.

**Check in** by ticking your name on the readers' schedule which is located in the sacristy. *Please do arrive in good time*, otherwise sacristans are left wondering if a lector going to arrive and are racing around at the last minute trying to find a willing stand-in. This is not a good way to begin the celebration of Mass.

Lectors should make sure that when they arrive that they have looked at the lectionary on the ambo in order to ensure that it is on the right page and that it is the reading that they have prepared to read.

The Lector with the responsibility for reading the Intercessions/Universal Prayers of the Faithful should have read them through a couple of times.

Lectors should choose a seat that is at the end of a row and that is near to the sanctuary.

The Lector might quietly pray:

Lord, invest me with Your Powers

as I prepare to proclaim Your Message.

I have prepared my readings, I have tried to take within me the meaning of what I am about to proclaim;

help me, I ask, to read not just with my lips

but with my whole heart and soul.

Lord, make me a hollow reed so that Your Voice will be heard by all who will hear me.

Free me of excessive concern over my performance, over the impression I create in this Sacred Action.

Convert my feelings of nervousness, turn all my apprehensions into an energy for proclaiming Your Word with power and authority.

May Your Spirit fill me as it fills the holy words that I am about to proclaim. Amen.

### **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LECTOR DURING THE LITURGY OF THE WORD?**

During the proclamation of the word of God, Christ “is present in His Word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,n.7). Lectors are Christ’s voice box for the community. If the faithful struggle to hear or understand the readings, they will struggle to hear or come to understand Christ.

When it is time for a lector(s) to read, they should not rush up to the altar. If there is more than one lector and someone singing the Psalm, they should all come up together. They should walk reverently and confidently towards the front, bow at the bottom step of the sanctuary before the altar, and then proceed towards the ambo.

Lectors should approach and leave the ambo by the wide gap between the ambo and the altar.

Lectors should ensure that they adjust the ambo microphone so that they are speaking in to it. Lectors need to stand close to the microphone.

Lectors must read with strength to their voice, distinctly and at a measured pace. Lectors must make a concerted effort to speak slower. Proclaiming the word of God at half the rate of conversational speaking is a good rule-of-thumb.

## **WHAT SHOULD LECTORS KEEP IN MIND WHEN PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD?**

After the opening prayer, the lector goes to the ambo for the first reading. The entire assembly should be seated and settled. Lectors should allow for a moment of silence, before they begin reading. This silent pause indicates that the assembly is ready to receive the proclamation of God's Word.

Because of the dignity of the Word of God, the book of readings used by lectors in the celebration of the liturgy may not be replaced by other pastoral aids, such as the missals or alternative translations. The book of readings on the ambo express the dignity of the living Word they contain.

Lectors must *proclaim* their reading, remembering that for the vast majority of the congregation, this is the first time that they have heard the readings and that many of them are not using a missal.

The lector should always strive to appear dignified, not nervous or casual. If they make a mistake or slip, there is no need to say "sorry." Instead, the lector should just pick up their place in the reading and continue.

At the beginning of a reading the lector says, "A reading from..." They do not say "The first reading is from..."

At the end of the reading, the lector should pause and proclaim "The word of the Lord" with confidence. Please *do not* mumble or say "This is the word of the Lord."

**The Psalm.** If the Psalm is not being sung, the lector should read the Response clearly and strongly. They should be attentive and listen to

the congregation and, if necessary, support the congregation by saying the response with them. The lector may need to do it after the verse(s) of the Psalm itself until the majority of the congregation are giving the Response.

The lector should never say "The response to the psalm is ..."

**The Intercessions/ Universal Prayers of the Faithful** The lector is leading the congregation in prayer. Lectors must lead these prayers with particular clarity, spiritual care and confidence.

The lector should remember that no one has seen or heard the Intercessions before that point in the Mass. If lectors do not pray the intercessions, then, the faithful will have no idea what they are meant to be praying for and the opportunity to pray for the Church and the World will be denied them.

After coming down off the sanctuary, lector(s) bow and return to your seat.

### **WHAT ADVICE DOES THE CHURCH GIVE LECTORS WHO ARE PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD?**

The Introduction to the Lectionary states, "a speaking style on the part of the reader that is audible, clear, and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the Word of God properly to the assembly" (General Introduction to the Lectionary, 14). An "audible, clear, and intelligent" proclamation of God's Word requires an appropriate use of inflection, pause, projection, phrasing, articulation, posture, and pace.

In applying these techniques of proclamation, the lector should consider that his/her primary task is to present the word of God in all of its richness and meaning. Hence, the lector should never proclaim God's Word in a monotone or robotic manner, but should always work to accurately reflect the genre, tone, and meaning of the particular scriptural passage.

As well, a style of reading or the use of physical gestures that would turn the proclamation of scripture into a dramatic act directing the attention of the assembly from the Word of God to the lector should be strictly avoided.

The lector should speak slowly, clearly, with meaning and with strength to their voice. It is the lector's voice that is doing the work, the microphone is only assisting it. The lector is not performing the reading, they are proclaiming it.

The lector should make eye contact with the congregation. This indicates that the lector is not reading for his/her own benefit but is proclaiming the reading for the benefit of the whole community.

If you have prepared the reading, you will be able to do this with confidence. Here are some suggested times to look directly at the assembly:

- when you first get to the ambo
- when you proclaim the announcement line
- during key words or phrases
- at changes in the text (e.g. changes in mood, time, place, character, relationship, etc.)
- just before the closing line (i.e. "The word of the Lord")
- during and after the closing line.