

Guidelines for Lectors: St. Denis, Holy Family and Immaculate Conception Parishes

Requirements for Lectors

1. Full Communion with the Church ... Those baptized are fully in the communion of the Catholic Church on this earth who are joined with Christ in its visible structure by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical governance. (Catholic Church Code of Canon Law, #205)
2. Must be at least in 8th grade

Before proclaiming the Word

3. Pray with the Scriptures and listen to what God may be saying to you. (GIL, #55)
4. Use the *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers and Proclaimers of the Word* words and the web site, Net Ministries at <http://netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm> to learn the context of readings and pronunciation of words. Web site offers audio pronunciations.
5. Practice aloud before Mass. Words sound different when read aloud. (GIL, #14)
6. Wear suitable clothing and shoes that show respect for the Word of God. You are in a sacred place doing a sacred action. (GIRM, #194, GIL, #54)
7. Appropriate dress honors and respects the ministry in which you are participating
8. It is recommended to refrain from drinking milk or eating sugary substances one hour prior to Mass. These tend to create mucous that may make it difficult to proclaim the word properly.
9. Respect and honor commitment. If you cannot be there, please ask someone to take your place
10. Check in at least 10 minutes before start of Mass and check name off list

In the introductory rite

11. Carry the Book of the Gospels slightly elevated. We recommend the bottom edge of the book be right above eye level. (GIRM, #194)
12. Carry Book with binding on your right side.
13. Upon reaching the altar, stand to the right of the priest and bow with the other ministers. (GIRM, #195, CB, #70)
14. Proceed to the altar on the piano side. Place the book on the altar in the wood holder with binding to left. If the holder is not there, lay book on the altar. (GIRM, #195)
15. Go to your place in the assembly near the front of the church.



candle cross priest lector candle

When proclaiming the Word

16. Bow in front of the altar and proceed to the ambo in a dignified and prayerful way. (GIRM, #274)
17. Adjust the microphone.
18. Stand in a dignified manner on both feet and with back straight.
19. Read with a firm voice. Read slowly and clearly using a range of rhythm, tonal quality and voice variety.
20. Do not add, delete or change words. It is God's word you are proclaiming. (GIL, #37)
21. Make eye contact. Scan the assembly before beginning and look up often to stay connected to members of the assembly.
22. Use your fingers to mark your place in the readings.
23. Pause for a moment of silent reflection after the first and second reading. (GIL, #28)
24. Pause between the announcing of the Book and the reading itself.
25. Pause briefly after the reading and before saying "the Word of the Lord."
26. If no psalmist is present, proclaim the Responsorial Psalm after the first reading. (GIRM, #196)
27. Do not leave the ambo until the assembly responds to the readings
28. Close Lectionary after second reading and place it on the shelf in the ambo/lectern.
29. Return to your place in the assembly in a dignified and prayerful way. Do not bow.
30. If no deacon is present, bow in front of the altar and proceed to the ambo in a dignified and prayerful way after the recitation of the Creed for the Prayer of the Faithful. (GIL, #53, GIRM, #197)
31. Do not leave the ambo until the end of the prayer for vocations or presider finishes the concluding prayer at the end of the intercessions.
32. Do not say "Prayer for vocations". Go right into the words, "Almighty Father, "
33. Return to your place in the assembly in a dignified and prayerful way. Do not bow.

In the concluding rite ...

34. Remain in your pew and depart with the rest of the assembly.

General Introduction to the Lectionary (Second Edition)

Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, 1981

12. In the celebration of Mass the biblical readings with their accompanying chants from the Sacred Scriptures may not be omitted, shortened, or, worse still, replaced by nonbiblical readings.²⁶ For it is out of the word of God handed down in writing that even now "God speaks to his people"²⁷ and it is from the continued use of Sacred Scripture that the people of God, docile to the Holy Spirit under the light of faith, is enabled to bear witness to Christ before the world by its manner of life.

13. The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the liturgy of the word. For this the other readings, in their established sequence from the Old to the New Testament, prepare the assembly.

14. A speaking style on the part of the readers that is audible, clear, and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the word of God properly to the congregation. The readings, taken from the approved editions,²⁸ may be sung in a way suited to different languages. This singing, however, must serve to bring out the sense of the words, not obscure them. On occasions when the readings are in Latin, the manner given in the *Ordo cantus Missae* is to be maintained.²⁹

16. In a Mass with the people the readings are always to be proclaimed at the ambo.³¹

28. Proper times for silence during the liturgy of the word are, for example, before this liturgy begins, after the first and the second reading, after the homily.⁵⁷

33. ... Since the ambo is the place from which the word of God is proclaimed by the ministers, it must of its nature be reserved for the readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (the *Exsultet*). The ambo may rightly be used for the homily and the prayer of the faithful, however, because of their close connection with the entire liturgy of the word. It is better for the commentator, cantor, or director of singing, for example, not to use the ambo.⁶³

35. Along with the ministers, the actions, the allocated places, and other elements, the books containing the readings of the word of God remind the hearers of the presence of God speaking to his people. Since in liturgical celebrations the books too serve as signs and symbols of the higher realities, care must be taken to ensure that they truly are worthy, dignified and beautiful.⁶⁴

37. Because of the dignity of the word of God, the books of readings used in the celebration are not to be replaced by other pastoral aids, for example, by leaflets printed for the preparation of the readings by the faithful or for their personal meditation.

51. "The reader has his own proper function in the Eucharistic celebration and should exercise this even though ministers of a higher rank may be present."⁸⁹

52. The liturgical assembly truly requires readers, even those not instituted. Proper measures must therefore be taken to ensure that there are certain suitable laypeople who have been trained to carry out this ministry.⁹¹ Whenever there is more than one reading, it is better to assign the readings to different readers, if available.

53. In Masses without a deacon, the function of announcing the intentions for the prayer of the faithful is to be assigned to the cantor, particularly when they are to be sung, to a reader, or to someone else.⁹²

54. During the celebration of Mass with a congregation a second priest, a deacon, and an instituted reader must wear the distinctive vestment of their office when they go up to the ambo to read the word of God. Those who carry out the ministry of reader just for the occasion or even regularly but without institution may go to the ambo in ordinary attire, but this should be in keeping with the customs of the different regions.

55. "It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader, even if they have not received institution, be truly suited and carefully prepared, so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture from listening to the sacred readings."⁹³ Their preparation must above all be spiritual, but what may be called a technical preparation is also needed. The spiritual preparation presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation. The purpose of their biblical formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. The liturgical formation ought to equip the readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the liturgy of the word and of the significance of its connection with the liturgy of the Eucharist. The technical preparation should make the readers more skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment.

GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL, THIRD EDITION

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B) The Liturgy of the Word

55. The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. As for the Homily, the Profession of Faith, and the Universal Prayer, they develop and conclude it. For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people,^[57] opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful.^[58] By silence and by singing, the people make their own, and affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith; finally, having been nourished by the divine word, the people pour out their petitions by means of the Universal Prayer for the needs of the whole Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

Silence

56. The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favor meditation, and so any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided. In the course of it, brief periods of silence are also appropriate, accommodated to the assembled congregation; by means of these, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily.^[59]

The Biblical Readings

57. In the readings, the table of God's Word is spread before the faithful, and the treasures of the Bible are opened to them.^[60] Hence, it is preferable that the arrangement of the biblical readings be maintained, for by them the unity of both Testaments and of salvation history is brought out. Nor is it lawful to replace the readings and Responsorial Psalm, which contain the Word of God, with other, non-biblical texts.^[61]

58. In the celebration of the Mass with the people, the readings are always read from the ambo.

59. The function of proclaiming the readings is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. Therefore the readings are to be read by a reader, but the Gospel by the Deacon or, in his absence, by another Priest. If, however, a Deacon or another Priest is not present, the Priest Celebrant himself should read the Gospel, and moreover, if no other suitable reader is present, the Priest Celebrant should also proclaim the other readings as well.

After each reading, whoever reads it pronounces the acclamation, and by means of the reply the assembled people give honor to the Word of God that they have received in faith and with gratitude.

60. The reading of the Gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence that is to be shown to this reading by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor, by the fact of which minister is appointed to proclaim it and by the blessing or prayer with which he prepares himself; and also by the fact that through their acclamations the faithful acknowledge and confess that Christ is present and is speaking to them and stand as they listen to the reading; and by the mere fact of the marks of reverence that are given to the Book of the Gospels.

The Liturgy of the Word

128. After the Collect, all sit. The Priest may, very briefly, introduce the faithful to the Liturgy of the Word. Then the reader goes to the ambo and, from the Lectionary already placed there before Mass, proclaims the First Reading, to which all listen. At the end, the reader pronounces the acclamation *The word of the Lord*, and all reply, *Thanks be to God*. Then a few moments of silence may be observed, if appropriate, so that all may meditate on what they have heard.

129. Then the psalmist or the reader proclaims the verses of the Psalm and the people make the response as usual.

130. If there is to be a Second Reading before the Gospel, the reader proclaims it from the ambo. All listen and at the end reply to the acclamation, as noted above (no. 128). Then, if appropriate, a few moments of silence may be observed.

131. After this, all rise, and the Alleluia or other chant is sung as the liturgical time requires (cf. nos. 62-64)

The Ministry of the Instituted Acolyte and Lector

99. The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer and, in the absence of a psalmist, recite the Psalm between the readings.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, the lector has his own proper function (cf. nos. 194-198), which he himself must carry out.

Other Functions

101. In the absence of an instituted lector, other lay people may be deputed to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, people who are truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared, so that by their hearing the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for Sacred Scripture.^[85]

D) The Functions of the Reader

Introductory Rites

194. In the procession to the altar, in the absence of a Deacon, the reader, wearing approved attire, may carry the Book of the Gospels, slightly elevated. In that case, the reader walks in front of the Priest but otherwise walks along with the other ministers.

195. Upon reaching the altar, the reader makes a profound bow with the others. If he is carrying the Book of the Gospels, he approaches the altar and places the Book of the Gospels upon it. Then the reader takes his own place in the sanctuary with the other ministers.

The Liturgy of the Word

196. The reader reads from the ambo the readings that precede the Gospel. In the absence of a psalmist, the reader may also proclaim the Responsorial Psalm after the First Reading.

197. In the absence of a Deacon, the reader, after the introduction by the Priest, may announce the intentions of the Universal Prayer from the ambo.

198. If there is no singing at the Entrance or at Communion and the antiphons given in the Missal are not recited by the faithful, the reader may read them at an appropriate time (cf. nos. 48, 87).

The Concluding Rites

169. Then the Priest venerates the altar as usual with a kiss and, after making a profound bow with the lay ministers, he withdraws with them.

Genuflections and Bows

274. A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration, and therefore it is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament, as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

During Mass, three genuflections are made by the Priest Celebrant: namely, after the elevation of the host, after the elevation of the chalice, and before Communion. Certain specific features to be observed in a concelebrated Mass are noted in their proper place (cf. nos. 210-251).

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself. Otherwise, all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.

Ministers carrying the processional cross or candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting.

275. A bow signifies reverence and honor shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them. There are two kinds of bow: a bow of the head and a bow of the body.

a) A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated.

b) A bow of the body, that is to say, a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers *Munda cor meum* (Cleanse my heart) and *In spiritu humilitatis* (With humble spirit); in the Creed at the words *et incarnatus est* (and by the Holy Spirit . . . and became man); in the Roman Canon at the *Supplices te rogamus* (In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God). The same kind of bow is made by the Deacon when he asks for a blessing before the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition, the Priest bows slightly as he pronounces the words of the Lord at the Consecration.

CEREMONIAL OF BISHOPS

Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995.

70. Neither a genuflection nor a deep bow is made by those who are carrying articles used in the celebration, for example, the cross, candlesticks, the *Book of the Gospels*.

The Word Alive

ANNE LOUISE BANNON

Diction: Getting it out clearly

Paul told the Corinthians in his first letter to them that Christ's followers could be the most amazing prophets on the planet, but without love, they were no more than noisy, clanging gongs (13:1). It is the same for those who proclaim the word today: you can have wonderful intent, vocal variety, and even good projection, but without clear diction, the result is noisy mumbling.

People don't consciously mispronounce words; however, we all do it. We slur, we drop final consonants, we get lazy, or we fail to really care about proper speech. Achieving good diction is a matter of awareness and practice.

For any lector, becoming aware of whether you are mispronouncing words is a good starting point. While every lector I know worries about mispronouncing biblical names like Azariel and Meshach, those are not the kind of words we should be worrying about. Consider, for example, "poor" and "pour." People from all over the country pronounce these two words the same way. But Merriam Webster's 11th dictionary offers two ways to pronounce "poor" and just one way to pronounce "pour." If you have access to the internet, go to www.merriam-webster.com, type in "poor," and click on the speaker symbols next to the word to hear the word's two possible pronunciations. You can do this for just about any word you're not sure about. Of course, you speak and pronounce words in whatever ways are typical of your geographic region; "correcting" or improving pronunciation should be

done only to the extent that your assembly can still understand you. This is yet another reason to practice your readings aloud with someone; a gentle critique of your diction always helps.

But what if you are going to be proclaiming in a different region — say, at a relative's wedding across the country? Or what if someone from the South moves to California — or someone has immigrated here and is not a native English speaker — and wants to be a lector in your parish? In no case should anybody adopt a false accent, but every proclaimer of the word must always work at being understood clearly by his or her listeners. This may mean slowing way down and practicing aloud more than you would in your native tongue or dialect.

All lectors can afford to stop and listen to themselves. If you ask every lector in your community to start working on better diction habits, those with different accents won't feel as though they are being singled out for correction. Eventually, they will start to pronounce words more similarly to the rest of your assembly.

Be aware, too, of combining words into a slur, such as the famous "wanchoo" for "want you." Any time you see the word "you," check to see if "want," "let," or any other word ending with a "t" precedes "you." This is a red flag that you might blend them together, probably because most people tend to do this in casual conversation. Similarly, be aware of dropping final consonants: "The word of the Lor" instead of "The word of the Lord." Don't be afraid to pronounce every sound of every word; it may sound a bit stilted to you, but it will sound normal to your listeners when you proclaim, and it will especially help the

senior members of your assembly hear and understand what you are saying.

Another common problem that some readers encounter is a lisp, pronouncing the "s" sound with a slight slur. To correctly pronounce that sound, your top and bottom front teeth must be close together with the tip of your tongue laying against the back of your bottom teeth. Practice forcing air through the space between your tongue and the roof of your mouth to make the "sss" sound. Notice that if you move the tip of your tongue up, "s" becomes "th," and you'll be saying "Thamuel" and "Leviticuth" instead of "Samuel" and "Leviticus."

Our ultimate goal is to proclaim the word in a clear and comprehensible way so that our assemblies can understand us. Lector coordinators should periodically check with the pastor and liturgy director to see if they have or are hearing any criticism about certain lectors. Provide any struggling readers with ways to improve. One simple suggestion is to have them start intentionally listening to how people speak (including themselves). When I was in school, my speech and diction teacher had us keep a journal of all the words we heard being mispronounced. This could be an interesting exercise for all lectors.

It's impossible for a lector to correct a problem if he or she doesn't know it exists. If you ask your lectors to develop an awareness of their speech and pronunciation, they will be able to correct specific problems. With study and observation, vowels and consonants can become clear and clean. A mature community of lectors will be able to listen to each other and offer loving criticism and support so that the word will effectively reach the people of God assembled. **ML**

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Anne Louise Bannon is a freelance writer living in Southern California. She has received certification as a master lector through the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and has been lecturing for more than 20 years. She holds a master's degree in oral interpretation, the art of reading aloud.