

Endnotes

- [1] Lumen Gentium as quoted in Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican City: St. Paul Books & Media, 1994), #1324, p. 334.
- [2] Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002), #3, p.2.
- [3] *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], #368 as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002), #3, p. 2.
- [4] *Sacramentary*, Prayer Over the Gifts, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, #3, p. 2.
- [5] GIRM no. 29
- [6] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #24.
- [7] The New St. Joseph Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word, (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 2003), p. 6.
- [8] GIRM no. 56
- [9] Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word, p. 6
- [10] *Ibid.* p. 9.

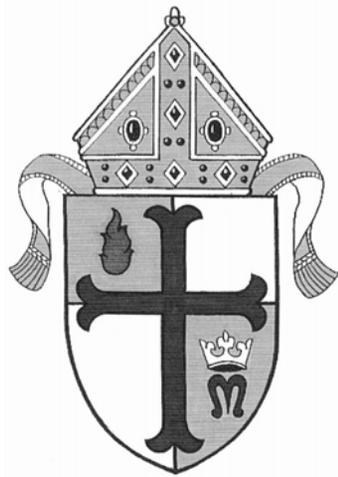
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Guidelines for Readers



Diocese of Metuchen



A Readers Prayer

*E*verlasting Father
in the beginning your Word brought forth life
and called us into being.

*In the fullness of time,
Jesus, your Son, the Word became flesh.*

*In the synagogue at Nazareth
and on the hills of Galilee,
He taught the good news of salvation,
the Gospel of life and of truth.*

*In an act of everlasting love
He opened His arms on the cross
and by His death destroyed all death,
leading us to everlasting life.*

*Lord, open my lips,
that my mouth may declare your praise,
Open my heart,
that I may proclaim the Word made flesh.
Strengthen my mind,
that I may live the holy words I speak.*

*For your Word is all holy and all true
and lives in glory with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. Amen. [10]*

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- For the reader at **Sunday Mass**, as covered above, you simply bow to the altar before you read the first reading. There is no need to bow after each reading before sitting back down. The one bow is sufficient.
- For the reader at **daily Mass**, you may be approaching the ambo from a pew in the assembly. In this case you would bow to the altar when coming up to do the reading. You would also bow to the altar when you return to your seat after the reading.
- If, as the reader, you are seated in a reader’s position in or near the sanctuary for the entire Mass, when the priest, deacon and Eucharistic ministers return to the sanctuary after distributing communion, you should stand until the Blessed Sacrament is returned to the tabernacle. When the priest or deacon genuflects, you should also genuflect.
- When serving in ministry during the liturgy, your actions can help to model for the congregation the actions and gestures they should also be using during the Mass. For example,
 1. Bowing during the creed at the words *“by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became Man.”*
 2. Raising your hands in the prayer position in praying the “Our Father”.
 3. Singing during all parts of the Mass that call for the congregation to sing.
 4. Bowing your head before receiving Communion under both species. This change is being introduced for ALL with the revisions to the GIRM. “When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister.” (GIRM #160)

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- Know the reading. This is why preparation is key. Read questions as questions. Once familiar with the type of reading, you can convey the correct tone and message.
- Avoid making any hand gestures while you read. Find a comfortable place for your hands while reading. Do feel free to use one of your hands and fingers to keep your place as you read.
- Be sure to read from the lectionary, not a missalette or other booklet or paper.
- Do not read too fast or too slow and include appropriate pauses where they are called for.
- Avoid being too dramatic when reading. Also avoid being monotonous. Reading the readings out loud beforehand helps you to determine where the necessary emphasis needs to be.
- Look up during the reading. Good preparation beforehand will help you become more comfortable in making eye contact with the congregation.
- If you make a mistake, don't panic! Simply reread the phrase correctly. There is no need to say "Excuse me" or apologize in any way.
- Seek out some honest critique of your reading style from family or friends.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire you in your ministry of reading God's word.

E) To Bow or Not to Bow...and Other Postures

In liturgical language, a bow is a sign or gesture of reverence and is appropriate at certain points during the liturgy. Likewise, it can be inappropriate at other times. Some helpful hints on when to bow or not:

- Whenever you pass in front of the altar you should bow to the altar.

silence before getting up to read the second reading. Say a brief prayer to yourself as a way of pausing. It may seem a little awkward at first but it will become second nature after some time and the congregation will become accustomed to it.

- At Sunday Masses with no music, or where the responsorial psalm is not sung, after you have read the responsorial psalm, simply pause for a brief moment before beginning the second reading.
- After the second reading, at Masses where the Book of the Gospels is used, remove the lectionary from the ambo or lectern and place it in the designated spot or shelf in the stand of the ambo. The deacon or priest will be proclaiming the Gospel from the Book of the Gospels.
- When there is no deacon present, after the creed you will need to read the general intercessions. Before Mass, make sure that the book with the intercessions is at the ambo. Practice reading the names on the sick list ahead of time to avoid stumbling over the names while you are reading them. Read them slowly and deliberately.
- Allow for a sufficient pause at the invitation for the congregation to add their own intercessions in the silence of their hearts.

There are some other good hints and tips for readers that are covered by Fr. Jude Winkler in the New St. Joseph Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word. For your convenience, some of the practical pointers are summarized below.

- Know the microphone system. Become familiar with the best position for the microphone for you so that you can best be heard. Do not be afraid to adjust it to that position when you get up to read if someone else has adjusted it in the interim.

Guidelines for Liturgical Ministers in The Diocese of Metuchen

“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.” [1]

The Eucharist constitutes “the church’s entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ Himself, our Passover and living bread.”[2] It is the “sacrament of sacraments.”[3] Through it “the work of our redemption is accomplished.”[4] He who is the “living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51) assures us, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” (Jn 6:54-55).

Readers Introduction

“When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel.” [5]

To serve around the table of the Lord, to proclaim God’s Word as a reader, is a special privilege and ministry to which you have been called. You have been asked to serve in this ministry because you have a special skill in your ability to read. As a reader, you also have an opportunity to use the gift that God has given you to present the Word of God to the community in a way that can move the hearts of those who hear it. In this role, you share in a long tradition in our Church of proclaiming the Word to the community.

Because it is an important ministry, we have a responsibility to prepare and properly dispose ourselves to present the Word of God with the utmost dignity and respect. Proper formation of our ministers is important. How we worship conveys the sacredness of what we believe in the mystery that is taking place in the liturgy. This also helps create the appropriate environment of prayer for all.

These guidelines have been prepared to assist all ministers in performing their role in a prayerful, reverent and consistent way. These guidelines are not intended to represent an exhaustive list. Questions about any aspect of serving as a Reader should be directed to the Pastor and/or Pastoral Staff for clarification.

A) Scheduling and Serving

Having a sufficient number of ministers available to serve at each Mass is an important dimension to creating the prayerful environment for Mass and attending to the spiritual needs of the community gathered. Each minister is responsible to fulfill assignments or arrange for substitutes if necessary. Scheduling methods will vary from parish to parish.

- When known in advance, particularly in vacation season, inform the parish office or the designated Coordinator of Ministers (if there is one) about days that you will be unavailable to serve so that you will not be scheduled on those days.
- If you cannot serve for the time assigned, **it is your responsibility to find a replacement.** Use the list provided to find someone who can take your place. **It is not easy to get a reader replacement in the few minutes before Mass begins. Please make every effort to ensure that someone is available to take your place.**
- Do not call the Parish Office or Pastoral Staff on Sunday to say you are unavailable.
- Be willing to serve without a “swap” if asked and you are available. It is a ministry and we should be willing to serve when needed and available. You never know when you might be in need of someone to fill in for you in an emergency!
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before Mass.

- Announce the first reading according to what is written in the lectionary. For example, “A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.” Please **do not add** any other commentary to this announcement. For example, **do not say**, “Our first reading today is taken from...” or other words to that effect. Simple is best and proper. Simply read what is written in the lectionary.
- At the end of the readings, *pause for a brief moment* and then say, “The word of the Lord.”
- Return to your seat at Masses where the responsorial psalm is sung by the cantor and assembly. There is no need for an additional bow at the end of the reading.
- If you are reading at Masses with no music, the reader is responsible to read the responsorial psalm. After the first reading, wait a brief moment before beginning the responsorial psalm. Then begin by simply reading the responsorial verse. As with the first reading, there is no need to add any additional commentary to what is written in the lectionary. For example, **do not say**, “The responsorial psalm is ...” or “Our response today will be...” Simply read the responsorial verse slowly and clearly and look up at the congregation when complete so that they know that they should now repeat the verse. Also, there is no need to use hand gestures (as a cantor might) to indicate to the congregation that they should respond.
- At Masses where the psalm is not sung and at daily Masses, the reader should repeat the psalm response verse along with the congregation. This is important and helpful since it can be difficult to remember the responsorial verse after each stanza of the psalm. Repeating the verse is an aid to better assist the congregation in their prayer and response.
- After the responsorial psalm, leave a brief period of

D) Good Practices for Readers in Serving at Mass

“The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation.” [8]

In the recent changes promulgated in the latest issue of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, there is an emphasis on maintaining periods of silence throughout the liturgy to ensure an atmosphere of reverence and prayerfulness. The reader plays an important role in helping to foster this environment both before and after the readings. This may mean a slight modification to the current practices of our readers to be more intentional about creating these silent pauses.

- Prepare the readings ahead of time as discussed above.
- Maintain a dignified posture during those times in the liturgy that you are NOT reading. Be attentive to the other parts of the Mass.
- Sit quietly and respectfully at all times during the liturgy. Avoid chatting and unnecessary conversation with other ministers around you which can create a distraction for people in the assembly.
- After the completion of the opening prayer, the reader should wait before approaching the ambo. The pause should not be so long as to feel uncomfortable. A good rule of thumb is to say a brief prayer in silence and then proceed to the ambo.
- “Walk to the ambo with a dignified, deliberate pace. Do not run.”[9]
- Bow to the altar before stepping in front of the ambo to read. See section E) for further clarification.

- The sacristy is a place for the priests and deacons to prayerfully prepare for Mass. To help maintain that spirit of prayerfulness for all ministers before Mass, please limit any social conversation in the sacristy.
- Check to see whether there is a deacon assigned at the Mass. If a deacon is present, the deacon should read the Prayers of the Faithful. If no deacon is assigned, then the reader has the responsibility to read the Prayers of the Faithful. There may also be times when the presider may choose to read them in the absence of a deacon. Check before Mass to determine who will read the intercessions.
- In some parishes, the reader is part of the entrance procession. If there is a Deacon assigned at the Mass, he should carry the Book of the Gospels in procession. If there is no Deacon and the reader is part of the procession, the reader may carry the Book of the Gospels. It should be held slightly elevated and placed on the altar. **The Lectionary should never be carried in procession.** The Book of the Gospels is not carried out in procession at the end of Mass.

B) Minister Preparation

Those who read the Scriptures must be “truly suited to perform this function and should receive careful preparation, so that the faithful by listening to the readings from the sacred texts may develop in their hearts a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture.” [6]

- At home, prayerfully reflect on the Scripture readings that you will proclaim on Sunday. Practice reading the passages out loud at home. Make use of the reader handbook, if one is provided, to help understand the context of the readings you will proclaim. The handbook is also useful in providing assistance with pronunciation of the more difficult words and names that might occur in some of the readings, particularly the Old Testament readings. Use the glossary at the back which provides a phonetic guide to pronouncing

such words and names. If a word is not there, check before Mass with the priest or deacon for help with the pronunciation.

- If there is no deacon and you will be reading the Prayers of the Faithful, spend some time reading over the intercessions for the day. Review any of the parishioner names on the sick list that will be read. Check with the priest or deacon for help with names you may not be sure how to pronounce correctly.
- In some parishes, you may be asked to read any announcements before Mass begins. Read them over before Mass and put them in the appropriate place.
- Spend some time in prayer before Mass begins to prepare and center yourself on being a Minister of God’s Word.
- Take your place a few minutes before Mass is to begin. Check to see that the readings are open to the correct place in the lectionary.

C) Proper Attire for Saturday/Sunday Liturgy

In the language of the liturgy, the ambo (lectern or pulpit) is, in effect, the throne for the Word of God. The ambo is the altar of the Word. As such, all that we do and how we approach that throne should speak of the dignity and respect for what is enthroned upon it. As readers then, our actions and gestures, our demeanor and our appearance should convey that attitude of respect which helps to create an atmosphere of prayerfulness in the liturgy.

Dressing appropriately, in all seasons, is important in contributing to this prayerful atmosphere. “You should be drawing attention to the Word of God and not to yourself. You should dress in a simple and respectful manner, which shows that you recognize the dignity of that which you are doing.”[7]

Appropriate

For Women

Modest:
Dresses, skirt suits
(appropriate length)
Pant suits, dress pants
Sweaters & blouses
Shoes (not sneakers)

For Men

Dress shirt w/tie
Sport coats
Suits w/ties
Collared shirts
Shoes (not sneakers)

Inappropriate

For Women

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
Tube or strapless tops, spaghetti straps
Bare midriff
Short skirts, shorts
Thong shoes, flip/flops or beach footwear
Tights, spandex leg coverings
Tight or low cut slacks, form fitting clothes or blouses

For Men

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
T-shirts (with or without writing)
Shorts (dress or otherwise)
Thong shoes, flip-flops or beach footwear
Sneakers

Notes:

- Although you may not be scheduled for a particular Mass, because of scheduling difficulties you may be called upon to serve to fill in for someone else. With this in mind it would be helpful, where possible, if you come dressed for this eventuality.
- **DAILY MASS EXCEPTIONS:** Less formal attire is acceptable for serving at daily or Saturday morning Mass. Good judgment is the best rule of thumb here.